MUSIC AND ITS CREATORS

NEVILLE D'ESTERRE

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By
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"One reads in the magic story-books of a charm or a flower which the wizard gives, and which enables the bearer to see the fairies. O enchanting boon of nature, which reveals to the possessor the hidden spirits of beauty round about him! spirits which the strongest and most gifted masters compel into painting or song. To others it is granted but to have fleeting glimpses of that fair Art-world; and tempted by ambition, or barred by faint-heartedness, or driven by necessity, to turn away thence to the vulgar life-track, and the light of common day."

Thackeray.

I

EVERY man who thinks will reach a time of life when he passes his more vivid impressions in review, and subjects his stronger feelings to analysis. It is not that he has ceased to receive impressions and engender feelings within himself, but that experience has clarified all these sensations and rid them of their original complexity. Former emotions have hardened into accepted and definite facts, fixed in shape, size, and appearance, and possessing certain meanings. They are no longer things of wonder in themselves; while the wonder evoked by their parent phenomena is the wonder, not of ignorance, but of knowledge. New impressions, when they are received, are not accepted now at their face value. Enthusiasms, it is felt, are dangerous things, unless they are grounded upon the clearest understanding; and it is felt also that enthusiasms so grounded have greater force than those which are simply borne in upon the soul on sudden waves of sentiment. And, for like reasons, sentiment in its turn deepens into sympathy, and becomes the golden link that binds emotion and judgment together.

Experience is the sum of experiences. But experiences can be welded together into experience only by the workmanship of clear thinking. Where that faculty is absent they go for nothing, or at the utmost develop into prejudices. Prejudices are unconsidered enthusiasms, or sentiment without judgment. They

signify something more than opinions. They imply zeal. But it is a zeal which is unscientific, and unrelated to any desire to know and cherish the truth. To harbour a prejudice on any subject is to close the mind, in that particular connection, to the gifts of enlightenment.

In virtue of these prefatory remarks, I can now assert without paradox that art, for its proper understanding, demands above all things a scientific habit of mind. To one whose mind cannot or will not work upon scientific lines, art can have little meaning. For him it is a thing which disturbs, pleasantly or otherwise, his lighter emotions. Beyond that it seems to him eminently unpractical and by no means an abstract or epitome of life itself in its every phase. Tell him, that between science and art there is no definite boundary ; that you cannot touch one without having your finger on the other ; that every great scientist is *ipso facto* a practical artist, and every great artist a practical scientist ; and he will disbelieve you, and think you no better than a sophist. Yet these things are profoundly true. Science is the first essential of art, art of science. They are the twin-souled child of the human intellect.

Education in a general sense is the only sure way of propagating artistic tastes. Only the educated, the uplifted mind is gifted with the sympathetic understanding needful for their acquisition. Without that gift, they do not pass beyond the stage of superficial emotions. They may impress, but they do not speak in recognisable and memorable language. They may awaken in the recipient a dormant sensibility, but they are not likely to fit life with new meanings. To those who can think clearly and consecutively, art presents itself as an integral and

necessary part of life ; to those who cannot, it seems a thing detached and unnecessary. The unthinking man (who is really the uneducated man) becomes the Philistine in matters of art, unless he is innately responsive to æsthetic impressions. If that responsiveness is part of his natural equipment, he becomes the sentimentalist. He can never become, in any acceptable sense, the artist.

It is necessary to generalise in this way before entering upon the particular subject which concerns me, because the misconception about these matters is very widespread. Materialistic ideas spring to some extent, from scientific research ; and materialistic ideas are inimical to the cult of beauty. The cult of beauty is centred in art ; and art, therefore, finds itself at war with materialism. Hence arises the belief that art is opposed to science, and that science works towards the undoing of idealism. It cannot be declared too emphatically that all idealism, ranging beyond the lightest sentiment, is deeply rooted in science, to which it owes its concrete form, and from which it derives all its productive energy.

Thus, when I advocate, as I shall, the propagation of artistic tastes, I shall do so in the sense that they are a necessary part of scientific education ; and most strenuously shall I combat the view, so profitable to materialism, that art exists for the sole purpose of amusing our idle hours. You will find me, in short, a disciple, not of Tolstoi, but of Avebury—who, by the way, was above all things a scientist. I advocate the spread of artistic culture, not because I want to see the whole world converted into a glorified drawing-room, but because I have a firm belief in the utility and the high social value of art.

II

I MIGHT easily have become a professional musician, for I was reared in an atmosphere of music. Both my parents were musical. My father had a fine appreciation of good music, though it was not deep-seated. My mother was intensely musical. It was with her a talent, which she developed by serious study, until she had an easy mastery over the craftsmanship of the art. And then nature came to her aid, providing her with a rich contralto voice, so that she became one of the best English interpreters of the German *lieder.* She sang in grand opera also, appearing in *The Flying Dutchman, Lohengrin, Tristan und Isolde, The Valkyrie, Romeo and Juliet, Cavalleria Rusticana,* and various other works in the English seasons organised by Sir Augustus Harris. She appeared at the famous Monday " pops," and in oratorio. Her habitation was made in the world of music, where she knew everyone worth knowing ; and her house became a focus of musical society. " A little music after dinner," might mean a Beethoven trio played by artists whom one paid half-a-guinea to hear at St. James's Hall ; or an interpretation of Schubert's songs by Henschel or Bispham. Or perhaps there might be heard Evangeline Florence's wonderful soprano voice ; or Francis Korbay would be at the piano accompanying his own Hungarian melodies.

At home everything conspired to encourage my

musical susceptibilities. But my sojourn at home in those days occupied little more than three months each year, the remaining nine being spent at school. And there those susceptibilities received no encouragement whatever. At school one was taught dead languages, and other elements of liberal culture, mainly as a matter of routine. The masters taught these things, not because they had any well-grounded belief in them, but because they knew of no alternative. They were taught and learned without enthusiasm, which centred itself almost exclusively upon athletics. The whole establishment was tremendously in earnest about cricket and football, which, instead of being sane and healthy pastimes promoting health with enjoyment, became a highly organised form of labour under authoritative magisterial direction. We were systematically inoculated, also, with the bellicose civilian spirit, so prevalent in the past century. It is easy now to realise the immorality of such doctrines expounded with fervour by mild Cambridge B.A.'s, who had never seen, and were never likely to see, a shot fired in anger.

But artistic culture in general, and music in particular, were distinctly discouraged. The preparatory school was visited once a week by a poor old hack of a music master, who, in their hours of recreation, drove a dozen unwilling youths through a thicket of dreary notes. Well do I remember the speckless and *fireless* drawing-room on a winter's day, and the frozen keys of the ebony upright piano; and the pale, watery-eyed old man commenting in sad tones on our pianistic shortcomings. Drudgery had long quenched the fire of artistic inspiration in that old man. He taught you to play certain pieces on the piano with something like mechanical correctness;

but he made no effort to inspire you with appreciation. He had tried, no doubt, too often, and failed. The atmosphere of the school, the whole attitude of those in authority there, was inimical to the birth or development of any such feeling, which would have had to encounter not only indifference, but scorn. This shows how little education meant to those who were its professed dispensers. That which was actually encouraged was a blank uniformity of crude tastes. Nothing seemed to be dreaded more than that a mind at all peculiar or significant should be produced by that school. And the school was the type of polite society in general.

At the public school, to which I was promoted in due course, " a certain liveliness " was displayed by the principal music master, who was a very sincere musician ; but, in spite of his efforts, the prevailing atmosphere was discouraging to the growth of a liberal idealism. To this, as an abstraction, you might be exhorted to pay lip-service ; but you were made to feel that to seek and ensue it savoured of effeminacy, and was rather contemptible. A debauched and deformed art had taken root there, characterised by lusty choral bellowing, in which fine shades and meanings vanished altogether. This was regarded, heaven knows why! as manly. Its chief result was, as far as I can judge, the development of a great deal of artistic hypocrisy. It was the cult of violence without passion ; and violence without passion has no meaning. It leads, nevertheless, by easy stages to false sentiment. This is equally so in every branch of art. In literature it gives us rhetoric in place of sincerity ; in the plastic arts, striking and sensational effects instead of harmonies of form and colour. Music it endows with the inflated paper

currency of sentimentalism, backed by no deeper feeling or truer understanding; and it leads to habits of thought and taste, incapable of fruitful development, and by no means easy, when allied with a score of stirring traditions, some of them not without nobility, to discard.

Seeing that from the public school I went on to a coaching establishment, where there was no facility for learning music at all, it is hardly surprising that in my adolescent years I had no cultivated musical taste worth mentioning. After a manner I could perceive that the kind of music practised by my mother was good; but that good music was, or could possibly be, an expression of that which was noblest in life I could not perceive at all. We are the children of civilisation. We stand among the richly endowed races of the world. Countless numbers of us are artists by instinct. I am not boasting when I include myself among these. I had, and I still have, what is loosely termed the artistic temperament. Save for home influences, brief, irregular, and evanescent, it was left uncultivated; and this, according to all the accepted canons, was a matter of no importance.

Beauty is the expression of human happiness; and art expresses beauty. Even when it expresses sorrow, it nevertheless expresses beauty and happiness. Pain, as such, has no place in it. To the racked soul it brings nepenthe, and opens the gates of joy. That is why it has become a part of our life. It was said by Huxley: "We possess in literary and artistic culture a never-failing source of pleasures, which are neither withered by age, nor staled by custom, nor embittered in the recollection by the pangs of self-reproach." Huxley was no æsthetic *poseur*, but a

man of science, a great exact thinker. And another exact thinker, and man of science, Lord Avebury, went farther, and asserted that, by the appreciative enjoyment of artistic culture, we made ourselves fit, mentally and morally, to tackle and control the serious and urgent problems of every-day life.

Why should this be so, and why should it strike these scientific thinkers in that light? Because it is the essence of art, springing as it does from the deeper, and, therefore, more characteristic thoughts of men, that it reveals the beautiful features of life as life's constituent principle, indicating that which is sordid and ugly as merely a noxious appendage. Art becomes, therefore, a well-spring of hope, a source of strength. By showing us that life is essentially beautiful, it sows in us the ambition to transcend its utmost grace in our own self-expression. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of art as a factor in education. And yet, even at the present day, with the analyses and summaries of Aristotle, Bacon, Goethe, and Emerson at our beck and call, we recognise it but grudgingly, and only in a loose and casual way embody it in the general scheme. Art is still regarded by our average educationalist as largely a waste of time.

III

I HAVE never made any pretence to be a good judge of painting. I have my definite preferences. I am told by the wise that they denote a Philistine mentality in this branch of art. I have too great an appreciation of Reynolds, Raeburn and Constable ; I prefer Velasquez to Rembrandt, and, *horribile dictu !* Raphael to Fra Angelico. Moreover, as regards sculpture, I am an unrepentant Hellenist, and would rather see my surroundings adorned with the works of Phidias than with those of Rodin. But I do not profess to know anything about the plastic arts.

To literature I have taken more kindly, though not to the extent of esteeming manner above matter. Fine literary style seems to me a thing which should evolve itself out of pregnant thoughts. Stylism I detest. To me it is a stagnant rhetoric, wanting even the attractiveness of homely effrontery. For the kind of writer who pours forth insignificant thoughts in elegant periods I can muster no enthusiasm. I dislike your cold edifice of fine words that contains no warm human life. I can work up no fervour for Walter Pater, or for Hewlett in his later phase ; and the windy verbosity of many of the modern poets (those mouse-producing mountains), stirs my animosity beyond measure. Before I can respect a work of letters I shall demand from it an element

of educative force. I shall want to feel, after I have studied it, that my mind is in some degree enriched and expanded. To open a book, this should surely be to open the gate of wisdom; and the written word that fails to beget thought in the reader, seems quite worthless to me, however fine the craftsmanship it displays. Therefore I have no patience with the *litterateur*, who seems to me a trivial person, playing with something which is serious; an unharnessed pedagogue airing a profitless scholarship.

But perhaps nobody appreciates the literary *poseur* except another of his kind. Perhaps the *litterateurs* form a society of mutual admiration.

Mere elegance has no artistic value in itself—and this is true of every form of art—because it has no practical value. *Ars est celare artem* is a very serious proposition, and one which the artist can realise only through the potency of his ideas. Whenever that potency is visible I, at any rate, am satisfied. The form of the thing will fashion itself in virtue of it. There will never be anything "precious" about literature with great thinking at the back of it; and even where the writer is no lord of letters (to use Wilde's phrase) you will find force and freshness in his limited vocabulary. I would pardon a hundred split infinitives rather than one nebulous idea. The undivided infinitive is but a habit of refined speech; but to give literary expression to unformed ideas is downright impertinence.

Of literature in its super-perfect sense I am, therefore, no advocate. I care for literature simply as the revelation of the workings of men's minds, of their attitude towards life and all material things. If, while granting this revelation, it can in addition be

moulded into noble and beautiful language, so much the better: it becomes then a giver of great joy; its power is then redoubled; it can fire the senses; it can lend beauty to the very thoughts of him who reads.

IV

I SHALL press that matter no further. Literature is my own vehicle of expression ; but it is on music, the third of the fine arts, that I intend to discourse. To discourse as an amateur. To express the views of him who listens to orchestras and string quartets from the stalls, and extorts melody from the household piano, not with his fingers, but with his feet. For, despite the influences of my brief home life, and because of the influences of my prolonged scholastic career, I grew up most decidedly an amateur in music : an amateurish amateur, amateurish not only in technique, but also in taste. All I can say is that I recognised certain music to be good, and certain other music to be indifferent or bad. I was destined, it seemed, for better things than I had achieved. For example, I was certain that the pretty little tunes of *The Geisha* (then in the fulness of its vogue) had but slight intrinsic value. They were pretty ; they were neatly harmonised ; they went with a certain swing. Also they were inseparably associated with the charming personality of Letty Lind ; and that undoubtedly contributed to their fascination. In the same way, any romantic youth will be fascinated by the drawing-room ballads warbled by the lady who has captured his heart. Letty Lind captured everybody's heart, and made everybody's heart glad. And one always thought of her as gracefully moving with a sweet smile amid the pretty tinkle-

tinkle of the *Geisha* music. But one came to recognise (or at least I did) that repetition soon wore that music thin. It was like some of the sweet white wines of the Continent, pleasant to the first taste, but having no body in them. As, after a bout of those beverages, you might long for a flagon of noble Chambertin or Château Margeaux, so, hearing the world in general repeating the Letty Lindish tunes *ad nauseam*, I felt the need for something better. And when my mother sang, as she sometimes did, Wagner's *Träume*, or Brahms' *Sapphische Ode*, I knew that I was hearing something which was on a different plane altogether.

But I did not rush immediately to the Queen's Hall, and other places where such music as this was being regularly and excellently performed. I felt a strong disinclination to do anything of the sort. I think I was rather afraid of being bored. I seemed to sense, as the American stylists say, intellectual difficulties. At an earlier age I had found the greater heights and depths of music somewhat beyond my reach. I felt about it, as I felt about Meredith's books (which I have since come to love), that it would leave me baffled. And so I went, to the best of my recollection, to the Gaiety instead.

Another deterrent influence was however, at work upon me. This was the fruit of my school training: the belief that any serious interest in high art denoted the "mug," and was essentially unmanly. That sort of thing was associated with spectacled youths of a furtive disposition, not very fond of soap and water. One felt that, as soon as one entered the realm of high art, one was brought into intimate contact with the sort of person who got kicked at school. It was not so easily apparent to the youthful

mind that the sort of person who deserved to be kicked at school, was often that bold exemplar of Roman virtue whose boot swung so readily about the tails of others. But, at all events, a self-respecting youth would risk many inconveniences, and forego many pleasures, rather than be thought a " mug."

And so I did not seek the better kind of music where it was to be found. My mother, also, at this time, had largely relinquished the study of the great classics in order to pursue investigation into the folk melodies of the British Isles ; and it was these, far more often than the works of the great masters, that she was singing now. It was an excellent thing, no doubt, to save the traditional airs of the countryside from oblivion ; but I think that the investigators let the collectors' enthusiasm warp their artistic judgment in some degree. Folk tunes, whatever their historical and antiquarian interest, are, as often as not, but crude and superficial melodies until they are seized by the mind of some master and converted into things of beauty. The songs of the English counties were, in sober fact, little better than the tunes dispensed by Letty Lind and others of her kind. Their modern accompaniments were often hackneyed and conventional, making them sound, for all the world, like rather antiquated drawing-room ballads. And a good many of them were palpably not folk-songs at all, but forgotten compositions a short hundred years old.

But this stuff, I was advised, was good music. It was impressed upon me that *Green Broom* and *Gossip Joan* had a higher intrinsic value than *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges*, and *Vergebliches Ständchen*. Extreme enthusiasts applauded the author of the Ingoldsby Legends, because he expressed a preference for the

old hunting songs over the "extravagances" of Beethoven. Nearly all these seekers after folk-music were excellent musicians; and yet most of them were so carried away by their discoveries as to be almost incapable of distinguishing the gems from the paste; and all manner of rubbishy tunes were solemnly proclaimed to be the shining stars of the musical firmament.

The impression left upon me was that, if this were good music, then good music was often both trivial and tedious, and by no means a thing to be sought at some inconvenience, and at a certain risk to my notions of Roman virtue.

But my awakening was close at hand.

V

THE *reveille*, which caused me to sit up and rub my eyes was sounded by Sullivan. I wonder how many seekers after the trivial that genial spirit has moved to reconsider their position. Their name is legion, I should think.

Sullivan was not a great master. Indeed, when he attempted to be masterful, he was not a master at all. But he had the singular and most valuable faculty of writing light, popular music that was really good. No composer has ever understood better than he the value of every instrument in the orchestra; and neither Schubert nor Mendelssohn was a more spontaneous melodist. He was also a ripe and appreciative musical scholar, gifted with a keen sense of values; and his respectful parodies of the great masters are some of the cleverest things in the whole literature of music.

Many years earlier I had heard *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and *The Gondoliers* at the Savoy: the original productions. But it was never suggested to me at that time that Sullivan was anything else than a writer of popular songs. Certainly I never heard any suggestion that his music should be taken seriously; though some of the *habitués* at my mother's receptions used to lament the fact that he had not gone on writing Golden Legends, and similar works of a solemn character. Had he done so, he might, it seemed, have claimed equality of rank with such musicians as Barnby and Bridge, instead of letting himself subside to the level of a mere theatre musician. I could

enter, therefore, into his musical presence without awe, and with an appetite slightly whetted by the recollection of a few pretty songs.

A D'Oyly Carte company visited Oxford ; and I found myself listening to *Patience.* It came to me as a revelation. It was as if, after suffering the society of cads and ignoramuses for a long while, I had suddenly been transplanted into the company of refined, delicate minded, and witty people, and could at length listen to conversation instead of chatter. Gilbert, of course, bore his share in the responsibility ; for in *Patience* his wit attains to almost its highest level. But from the very outset the music electrified me. I detected in it innumerable touches quite unknown to the musical comedy people : little delicacies of scoring that caused the notes to glitter like gems ; sudden, unexpected dramatic turns. This music took me by surprise ; the music of the musical comedies never did.

From that day forward I found diminishing attractions in the tinkle-tinkle of musical comedy. Sullivan provided something, not only far better and more pleasing, but entirely different—something, as I presently discovered, which time did not stale. And it was also quite apparent to me, from the very start, that many of the more popular numbers in the Sullivan operas had the least musical value. I could " with cultured taste distinguish gems from paste " ; and the music which illustrates those words seemed trivial stuff to me, compared with " Prithee, pretty maiden," and " If Sapphir I choose to marry."

Presently I found myself being bored by musical comedy, except in the scenes where Edmund Payne and Huntley Wright were present with the irresistible fund of merriment.

VI

I had discovered good music, and my own taste for it, without being aware of the fact. I was quite satisfied that my musical tastes were frivolous, and that I had done nothing more than take to a more refined sort of frivolity, appropriate to the Oxford atmosphere. I was still under the impression that Sullivan's music was not to be taken seriously, as music ; and I still believed that I did not want to take music seriously. There were very superior musical persons in Oxford ; and their manner of holding forth on music was not inviting to the outsider. With Sullivan, I felt, I could stand with one foot in refinement, and the other on the familiar ground of convention. What need was there for any further advance ?

Well, that was, so to speak, the taking of the Bastille in my revolution. I thought, as Lafayette and others thought, that the conflict was over. I was a Sullivanite, just as the French revolutionary of 1790 was a constitutionalist. But my Tenth of August was in store for me. It came one morning when certain sons of toil carried something resembling a roll-top desk into the drawing-room of the Wiltshire mansion which my parents then inhabited. This contrivance was pushed up against the keyboard of the old Broadwood grand piano. Certain machinery tumbled out of its interior, and revealed rubber-coated pedals. Half-a-dozen rolls of perforated paper

were produced, attached to slotted spools. I was invited to try one. It was the opening movement of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony.* The machine was brutally mechanical. There was no effective sustaining pedal. Accelerations and retardations were entirely arbitrary. Played softly, it usually failed to make any sound at all. But it came to me as a breath from heaven. I sat down to it, and found myself, with my sympathetic legs, interpreting the masters.

What cared I if to others my efforts sounded mechanical? To me they sounded divine. My mind could interpret while I played; it could leap from what was to what might be. There was the *Tannhäuser* Overture, a tremendous cascade of unsustained notes, like little stones rattling against a window pane. There was the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger,* throughout the greater part of which the melody was utterly swamped in a roaring sea of bass notes. There was the *Hebriden* Overture; the *Danse Macabre;* Chopin's A Flat Ballade. Many more were added. These included examples of tinkle-tinkle. I thought it would be hardly good form to be without them; but their sojourn in the house was brief. Brief also, I fear, was the sojourn of Sullivan, ordered though he was with enthusiasm from the depôt. He was for the time being eclipsed, not only by undoubted superiors, such as Beethoven, Chopin, and Wagner, but by others to whom, like Saint-Saëns and Grieg, I would not unhesitatingly allow precedence nowadays.

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VII

To pursue the story of these developments step by step would be tedious. Having carried my narrative to the introduction of this early piano-playing machine into the country mansion, I feel that I must abandon historical sequence, lest I find no space left for comment and criticism.

Let it suffice to say that I became a promenader.

To the uninitiated this may sound as if I took to gently sauntering on fashionable footpaths, instead of stretching my legs in healthy exercise. But to the initiated my meaning will be clear. I became a reckless pipe-smoker at the Queen's Hall in the early autumnal season of the year. And while I smoked recklessly there stole gradually upon me new appreciations : Haydn, Mozart, Brahms ; Beethoven, more Beethoven, and yet more Beethoven ; disconnected fragments of Wagner, like dazzling glimpses of another world, alluring, tantalising. Further, between one reckless pipe and another, an antipathy was generated within me—my first musical antipathy, and worth noting on that account. Its object was Richard Strauss. Time has softened that antipathy somewhat, but has failed to remove it altogether. I have always felt him to be an amazingly clever charlatan, meaning by that term, not a dispenser of deliberate deceit, but a brilliant musical talker with no original ideas. I had been warned that Strauss was very great and very difficult to understand. To

invert a famous epigram, I went to pray and remained to scoff. I could discover in Strauss neither greatness nor difficulty. I found ample cleverness, ample pretentiousness, a tremendous mock profundity. At the beginning I was earnestly endeavouring to discern the revolutionary genius he was represented to be; and I was puzzled because, as time went on, no such figure became visible. The truth dawned on me by degrees. There was no genius; there was no revolution; there was merely a big, glorified Meyerbeer, with Wagner, Berlioz and Liszt at the back of him, instead of Mozart and Beethoven.

For a while Richard Strauss was my musical *bête noire*; but time, as I say, softened my feeling against him, so that I could at least appreciate his occasional flashes of genuine inspiration; as, for example in *Till Eulenspiegel*; certain sections of *Ein Heldenleben;* two or three scenes in *Salome; Ariadne auf Naxos; Rosenkavalier.* But, even at his best, he is not much above the level of Liszt; and he is no more the heir to Wagner, than Alfred Noyes is the heir to Swinburne.

Strauss, then, was the target of my antipathy. My sympathy, however, did not fly at once to that which was most worthy of it. It is seldom, indeed, that artistic appreciation begins by embracing the best and noblest things. The superficially brilliant, the sensational, the sentimental, the sugary things—these are apt to have the first hold upon one's affections. Turgeniev takes hold of us long before Dostoievski, and George Eliot before George Meredith. This is not to cast any aspersion on Turgeniev and George Eliot. It is merely to say that, great as they are, Dostoievski and Meredith are very much greater.

So it was only by degrees that Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner conquered me. Bach and Brahms were still slower in gaining complete command of my esteem. Their greatness was apparent to me as a general rather than a detailed impression. The full and perfect comprehension of them seemed to require a certain effort of mind. Beauty and grandeur one detected at once. One did not always detect at once what underlay that beauty and grandeur—certain characteristics of such men, which, when one compares them with the general run of artists, one can only call Olympian. These characteristics could be discerned more easily in Handel; but I think the earthly stage carpenter had a hand in the fashioning of his Olympus.

But Tchaikovski overwhelmed me. The mature critic of to-day may smile, as Gibbon would have put it, at the follies of the impressionable youth. Still, grievously as Tschaikovski has subsequently fallen in my estimation, I feel no shame in confessing my original enthusiasm. Did I not err in good company; indeed, in that of most of our eminent musical Platos? Except for a few staid elders, most of whom were so staid that they had hardly learned to tolerate Wagner, the whole musical world went Tchaikovski mad. I am sure that the eminent conductor of the Queen's Hall Orchestra (than whom there are few sounder musicians among us), directed the interpretation of the *Symphonie Pathétique*, and similar works, with a soaring faith in their eternal beauty and power. To the uninitiated ear they were, indeed, marvellously arresting and stirring. They did not creep into your esteem with a soft, gentle insistence, but descended upon you in showers of flaming glory, or sobbed their way straight into the core of your emotions. You

were lifted off your feet. In your amazement you let the reckless pipe go out. Had anything so bold ever been conceived, anything so stupendous ?

Yes it had, by Bach, by Beethoven, by Wagner ; only a hundred times bolder and more stupendous. But it did not take hold of you in the crowded street, as it were, like Tchaikovski's music. It demanded thought, and the habit of thinking. It was not an instantaneous magnet to all your more volatile emotions. One ought to have known that Tchaikovski could not last ; but, curiously enough, one did not know.

I am not saying that Tchaikovski is trivial, like Offenbach for example. Far from it. He was a very great, but oddly incomplete artist. His ideals were high, and he was guiltless of any sort of humbug or pretence ; but his powers were unreliable. He was for ever striving to transcend his own abilities, to express something beyond himself. He was on the verge of Olympus, and needed to go but a step further to enter it ; but he just lacked the strength to take that step. In the *Romeo and Juliet* and *Francesca da Rimini* Fantasias, he was almost among the gods. Those are works which will endure, whatever the fate of the rest may be ; but it is important to note that it was not upon them that his original vogue was built up. The *Symphonie Pathétique,* the Fourth Symphony, the Piano Concerto in B Flat Minor, those are the pieces that took the musical world by storm in the days of the Tchaikovski mania. Speaking for myself I can barely sit through either of those symphonies to-day (though I still regard the development section in thc first movement of the *Pathétique* as a fine piece of work) ; while the announcement of the B Flat Minor Concerto is the surest way of keeping

me at a safe distance from the concert-hall where it is performed. Other works, such as the Fifth Symphony, the Air and Variations in G, the *Capriccio Italien*, and the Violin Concerto have worn better; and the *Casse Noisette* music has an everlasting charm.

VIII

The cult of Tchaikovski sprang up suddenly ; and as suddenly it faded away. The public had ceased to worship him long before the directors of orchestral concerts were aware of the fact. When the truth dawned upon them, the reaction set in with a vengeance, and it went too far ; and the nonsense talked by his detractors was no less fantastic than the nonsense previously talked by his idolisers. He was, in sober fact, by far the greatest Russian composer before Scriabine ; and it was absurd to neglect him altogether in favour of that genius without craftsmanship, Moussorgski, or of such composers as Balakirev, Rimski-Korsakov, and Borodine, who, in their less inspired moments, descended to depths of dreariness which Tchaikovski never plumbed. It would have been more intelligible to push Glazounov into the place of honour ; for, uninspired though he is, Russia has produced no abler craftsman. But no absurdity could deter the iconoclasts in their anxiety to stamp out the last traces of their old idolatry. Having discovered (as, being musicians, they were bound to discover) that the Piano Concerto was a vain thing, and that the stirring battle therein between soloist and orchestra was nothing more than a child's competition in noise, they felt it incumbent upon them to discover that all the rest of Tchaikovski's compositions were vain things. Consequently his proper position in the musical firmament

has not yet been allotted to him. Failing to adore him, we must, it seems, hold him up to scorn. But really he is not quite important enough to deserve all that fuss. He is just an interesting composer of the romantic school, who, when he did not attempt to overreach himself, wrote some very charming and beautiful music, illustrative of the simple and child-like emotions of men. If, for purposes of comparison, you want to couple him with any other composer, whose fame has stood the test of time, Mendelssohn is the name you should select—Mendelssohn, who, like Tchaikovski, received first undue adulation, and then undue disparagement ; but has found at length his proper level, not among the giants, but high rather than low.

In forming a just estimate of Tchaikovski I was at a disadvantage because too much praise was being lavished on him. In forming one of Mendelssohn I was equally at a disadvantage because he was being unduly depreciated. As in Tchaikovski's case, some of his worst compositions were being held up as his most characteristic works. But that is an unfair way of judging any artist. We cannot judge George Eliot by *Daniel Deronda*, nor Thackeray by *The Adventures of Philip*. The *Huldigungsmarsch* is not characteristic of Wagner, nor does the *Polonaise Fantaisie* provide us with a summary of Chopin. Mendelssohn, besides being essentially a romantic, resembled Tchaikovski in that he received his impressions of life chiefly through the window of a comfortable drawing-room. He was rather remote, therefore, from nature ; though never so utterly remote as some of those artists of the present day who make a special business of nature-interpretation. Nature will never get hold of them : the rigid con-

vention of their calculated unconventionality will be too strong for her. But she did get hold of Mendelssohn sometimes, as sometimes she got hold of Tchaikovski. She caught Mendelssohn when he sat down to write the *Hebriden* Overture ; and, had he never written anything else, that work would have stamped him as a fine artist. In the beautiful *Variations Sérieuses* (his masterpiece to my mind), some deeper voice called him ; and, if he could have maintained the level he achieved in that work, his place in musical history would have been very much higher than it is. But he was not far away from that level in the Pianoforte Quintet, and in the hastily written Overture to *Ruy Blas*. And he left us a Violin Concerto which is one of the best works of its kind.

It took me some time, however, to overcome my prejudice against Mendelssohn. It is a curious thing that these groundless prejudices—groundless because they are not based upon one's considered judgment—are often much more difficult to shake than well-grounded opinions. The fact is that we take our attitudes far more seriously than our convictions. That is because our attitudes often flatter us, and our convictions seldom do. For quite a number of years I cherished my prejudice against Mendelssohn. Sternly I rejected the feelings of pleasure with which his music often inspired me. By doing so I, who listened enrapt to the clamour of Tchaikovski's trombones, imagined that I was keeping myself on a very superior artistic plane. And then came a sudden revelation which blew the folly out of my head.

The occasion was a promenade concert. There was a mixed programme of modern works, winding

up with the Italian Symphony. One of the items was Charpentier's uninteresting *Impressions d'Italie,* and this was followed by the early symphonic work of Richard Strauss upon the same theme. Charpentier gave us the Italy of the oleographs ; Strauss the Italy of the barrel-organs. It was reserved for Mendelssohn to give us the Italy of the bright sunshine, and the sparkling sea. Charpentier and Strauss, together with Benjamin Godard and Glazounov had reduced my brains to a state of heavy insensibility. And the despised Mendelssohn burst upon my senses, like the morning sun into a shuttered room. From thenceforth I felt that the fashionable Wedding March, and the drawing-room skyscape of *Fleecy Clouds,* and the sound of jingling money-bags in the G Minor Piano Concerto were things of no moment. The man was a magician. I had the best possible evidence that he was a magician, for he had worked a spell upon me. And from that day onward I set myself to see the best in him instead of the worst. Only in that way, I may add, is it possible to form a just estimate of any work of art. Look for the best. The worst will always reveal itself.

IX

These composers are not among the greatest ; but they have just such a permanent place in music as Edward Fitzgerald, and Longfellow, and Robert Louis Stevenson have in literature. To acclaim them great masters shows a shallowness of judgment ; but to condemn them as worthless shows a lack of judgment.

The Wagner cult was a far more serious affair than that of Mendelssohn or Tchaikovski ever was. When I say serious, I mean formidable, menacing to a fairly balanced sense of appreciation.

The masculine reader may have had his domestic retreat invaded, now and again, by an efficient spring-cleaning housewife, who, in her attack on dust and cobwebs, has threatened with destruction all sorts of other things having a value more real than apparent. Well, Wagner made, in effect, a spring-cleaning raid into the temple of music, and cleared away an immense amount of rubbish ; but he came very near to clearing away a great deal of stuff which was not rubbish at all. He abolished Hérold and Niedermayer ; but he very nearly abolished Verdi as well. He drove Raff and Marschner out into the cold ; but it was no fault of the ardent Wagnerites that Schubert and Brahms did not go the same way. The world of music did not accept Wagner at once ; indeed it was very slow to recognise him. But, as soon as he was accepted, he became a religion ; he

became a being above criticism ; for many he represented the final consummation of all music. The true Wagnerite might admit that Bach, Mozart and Beethoven were great composers ; but the proof of their greatness was the fact that Wagner had built up his supreme art upon the foundations which they had laid down. Therein lay their true and only title to fame. Their music, in itself, could hardly be tolerated in these enlightened days. Mozart was "tuney"; as if tune, or melody was a defect in musical compositions. Beethoven was "early Victorian"; though he had been twelve years in his grave when Queen Victoria came to the throne of England, and the greater part of his compositions belonged to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. Such music the Wagnerite would allow to be a wholesome training for such as had not achieved a full comprehension of the *Meister's* genius; but the history of music proper began with *Der Fliegende Holländer.*

The complete and exclusive Wagnerite was a very curious phenomenon. I can never believe that he, or she (for the creature was a woman more often than a man) had any real comprehension of Wagner's music. You cannot, it seems to me, understand the music of Wagner without developing a very intimate and sympathetic understanding of all that led up to Wagner. Wagner explains not only Bach and Beethoven, but also Palestrina and Monteverde, Couperin and Scarlatti, Handel and Haydn, Mozart and Gluck. His music makes their music clear, revealing, not defects and shortcomings (which Wagner was musician enough to detect and pass over), but the wealth of intellect and inspiration that underlies it. This is simply because Wagner

was capable of gathering into his mind and retaining there all the influences bequeathed by his great predecessors. It might be just to say that he excelled them all. I do not say so myself ; but I should not consider the statement extravagant. I consider that he was the equal of the greatest of them—of Bach, that is to say, or Beethoven ; but I do not think that he was more than the equal. That is by the way. The true Wagnerites had the same opinion of these old masters as the early Christians had of the old gods of Greece and Rome ; and this peculiar and unprecedented exclusiveness can only be explained on the theory that they made a fetish or idol of Wagner, and, because they made a fetish or idol of him, were content to adore without understanding him. I believe they did not want to understand him ; they wanted to be dazzled and blinded by him, and to prostrate themselves before him in an ecstasy of sentiment. They used a kind of ritual language in speaking and writing about him, a language filled with passionate adjectives, and with an underlying suggestion that it wanted to be set to Wagnerian music. I think that perfect Wagnerism was a craze, and an unintelligent craze at that ; and the magic of his purple passages has never altered my opinion about it.

The man, of course, was a genius, comparable with Goethe in literature, with Michael Angelo in painting. He is one of the great figures of history. The tasks he undertook were Herculean ; his triumph over them was as complete as human nature would allow. No other musician was so great a man ; and the glaring defects in his character cannot hide his greatness from view. The defects were glaring enough. He was a bad friend ; he was ungrateful ; he paid no regard to the feelings of others ; he harboured a

colossal egoism, giving rise to selfishness on one side and conceit on the other. For the numerous personal enmities he inspired, he had nobody but himself to blame. His detractors (those conservative musicians who have never overcome their resentment at his revolutionary tendencies), have made a great deal of these defects; but, when we consider him as an artist, they are neither here nor there. His selfishness was less than Swift's; he was not wicked like Byron; nor a peculator like Bacon; nor a bully like Milton; nor a scamp like Cellini; and he had more courage than Goethe, more pride than Coleridge. Nobody suggests that the works of all those artists are disfigured by their vices and weaknesses, and should be repudiated on account of them. And so we may well ignore the vices and weaknesses of Wagner. One may say of him what Carlyle said of Danton: "He had many sins; but one worst sin he had not, that of cant." His detractors, from Davison onwards, have displayed a good deal of that "worst sin."

Wagner-idolatory is almost a thing of the past. The homage paid to him to-day is more honest and sincere, and more worthy of a great artist; and, as far as musical people are concerned, it is nearly universal. Few of his old detractors survive; and his new detractors—they who would fain consign him to "the limbo of back numbers"—are too insignificant, intellectually as well as numerically, to disturb the equanimity of the critic.

X

I HAVE youthful recollections of Wagnerian opera. At the age of thirteen I heard *Die Walküre* done in English at Drury Lane. My chief concern on that occasion was to pick out Waltraute from among the other Valkyries, because Waltraute was my mother. I carried away a general impression that the music was very wonderful and exhilarating, and the dramatic termination of the second act stirred me deeply. David Bispham was the Wotan ; and a very majestic and god-like Wotan he made. I have a suspicion that, apart from him, the performance was rather ragged.

Not long afterwards I heard *Lohengrin* at Covent Garden with Bispham again as Telramund, Emma Eames as Elsa, and the two De Reszkes as Lohengrin and Henry the Fowler. This must have been a very splendid performance ; but, being in my nonage, and having nothing in my recollection to compare it with, I could only admire uncritically. I did not grasp the beauty of the music in detail ; for, some years afterwards, when I heard *Lohengrin* again, it came to me as an entirely new revelation.

It was by hearing him in detached fragments at the Monday promenades that I first learned to appreciate Wagner. A Wagner concert became a magnet which could not fail to attract me. I supposed that it would go on attracting me as long as I lived. But after I had become acquainted with the operas themselves,

my desire to hear Wagner in fragments diminished. Nobody who has studied the poets in bulk can suffer their presentation in anthologies ; and still less will he be bothered with quotations. The Prelude to *Tristan* without *Tristan* is tantalising enough. But what if it be followed by the Venusberg Music without *Tannhäuser*, the Ride of the Valkyries without *Die Walküre*, and the Good Friday Music without *Parsifal?* It is as unsatisfying as one movement of a Beethoven symphony without the others. If I am to hear Wagner at concerts, I prefer to have him as one item in a mixed programme ; and that item should be one of the *Vorspieles*, or a special concert arrangement such as *Waldweben*, or an isolated work like the *Siegfried Idyll*. When bits of his essentially illustrative music are extracted from their context, and performed as if they were works of absolute music, designed as such, I find myself (with my knowledge of the context) simply disturbed and dissatisfied. I miss the broad outlines and the continuity.

In the same way, I do not care to hear fragments of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* performed at concerts. They are essentially parts of a corporate whole. Converted into mere songs, they have lost their significance.

But in the days of my apprenticeship I was not so particular. I entered the Queen's Hall on the Monday evenings with something like the awful solemnity of Parsifal setting foot in the sacred halls of Monsalvat. Nothing but the Friday doses of Mozart, Handel, and Beethoven saved me from becoming one of the complete Wagnerites, and parting with all sense of musical proportion. The old masters were just too powerful for fragmentary

Wagner. In the concert room they were on their native soil. They provided complete and intact works of art, sufficient in themselves ; and they won the day. The time came when my Monday perch was, not left empty, but occupied by another ; but for several years I remained faithful to Friday and the classics.

XI

THE classics? Yes, but, of course, at the present day Wagner is just as much a classic as Handel or Beethoven. So is Brahms. So is César Franck. Their works have emerged triumphant from the test of time. Certainly, therefore, they are classical. But we still use that term in the sense that fitted it fifty years ago. By the classics we mean Beethoven and his predecessors. And, as Beethoven marks a definite turning-point in the history of music, it is just as well that we should have a distinctive label to mark the epoch which concludes with him. We need not be pedantically accurate then. It is convenient to speak of the pre-Beethoven period as classical, and there is no harm in understanding the word to have that meaning.

That period has no definite beginning; for, if we say that it begins with Bach, there present themselves to our view Domenico Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Purcell, Couperin, and other older masters, vehemently demanding admission into the sacred circle. Bach does not mark a turning point so clearly as Beethoven does. Like nearly all his predecessors he wrote pure music—music, that is to say, which expresses no definite ideas beyond the subconscious, or elemental thoughts that possessed the mind of the composer when he wrote it, and which *prima facie* expresses nothing else than music to the listener. (In a deeper

sense the greater works of pure music do express something else than music to the listener; but that will be discussed in its proper place). It is true that Bach was an innovator; but his innovations were technical, and in no sense did they tend to alter the character of the art itself. He is the central, the dominating figure of his epoch. What he marks is the apex of the classical period in music. He might be called the great patriarch of musical history.

Beethoven has an altogether different significance; for he was the first who, in a large sense, made music a vehicle for expressing the deeper and sublimer thoughts of men. Purcell, of course, had written music which was illustrative of definite ideas, but only in a capricious way, to give expression to passing emotions; and he had never attempted to express an ideal in music. The music of Bach, Handel, and Mozart might be said to express their ideals; but the expression was unconscious and unintentional. Beethoven expressed his ideals in music consciously and intentionally. The intention is apparent in the music itself. Emotions with him develop into moods, and beget thoughts. Music becomes more than an art, it becomes a language.

This does not mean that Beethoven's music is greater than Bach's. It means that it is different. Bach, it must be remembered, lived in a settled world; in a Germany of small, backward, but secure principalities. The wars which rent Europe in his time were affairs of professional armies, waged upon convenient battle-grounds: not a matter of much concern to a North German organist. Society in general was quite restful. Catholicism and Protestantism had agreed to differ. The violent English, who had decapitated their king, had, so to speak,

re-capitated him. Tranquillity was the order of the day.

Bach's music reflects the state of society in which he lived. It was conceived in tranquillity. It is above all things tranquil. The emotions it portrays are fundamental, philosophical ; and it portrays them in a serenely majestic way. In its serenity it is typical of the period. All artistic expression was tranquil at that time, if we except the work of that child of all the ages, the Dean of St. Patrick's. It was the time of slack water after the flood tide of the Renaissance. Bach's contemporaries were Addison, Congreve, Montesquieu, Berkeley, Handel, Godfrey Kneller. The disturbing pens of Voltaire, Fielding and Defoe had hardly begun to wag. Men of letters touched but lightly on the deeper things of life. Every kind of art tended to be formal, artificial and pure.

Bach's music was, therefore, music and nothing else. It expressed the simple emotions of joy or sorrow which its composer felt ; it reflected his ardent religious faith. It voiced John Sebastian Bach, and all mankind through John Sebastian Bach. But its expression was that of musical sound alone. You cannot interpret Bach's music in words.

And yet there is no greater music. What is the key to its greatness? This is a difficult question to answer. It is not the amazing mechanical skill of the composer ; for, if it were, we should have to place Max Reger and Glazounov on the same level as Bach, which would be preposterous. It is not mere beauty of melody and harmony. It is something more than the combination of these things : a revelation of the godlike in man which man cannot analyse. It is in Homer ; and in Homer, as in Bach, it remains unexplained.

Bach and Beethoven lived in different worlds. At the time when Beethoven came to maturity the civilised world was in a ferment. The spirit of change was afoot, stirring men's souls. Great and terrible things were happening—the French Revolution, the succession of tremendous wars that accompanied and followed it. The intellectual life of Germany had awakened from its slumber. The name of Schiller was on men's lips; and behind Schiller arose the great figure of Goethe. It was a time of disturbance, when use and faith were shaken to their foundations, and preconceptions were shattered. And hope shone before the eyes of men as it had never shone before, a new inspiration calling for a new expression.

That phase of insurgent ideas and new enthusiasms expresses itself in the music of Beethoven, and makes it different from all that had gone before. It expresses itself in Goethe's writings also; and the reason in each case is the same. Beethoven and Goethe expressed the spirit of the age because they were men of genius. Beethoven, like Goethe, speaks, not for himself alone, but for mankind. It is idle to ask whether Bach, had he lived in the time of Beethoven, would have expressed himself in Beethoven's manner; or whether either, translated to the period of Wagner, would have developed his art on Wagner's lines. Contemporary men of genius do not always speak with the same voice, and are not always moved by the same ideas. Take, for example, the familiar case of Dickens and Thackeray; or take an even better example, that of Tolstoi and Dostoievski. Besides the common environment which embraces and influences all contemporaries, each person is influenced by his own peculiar circum-

stances, and by the environment he creates for himself. It is possible that Bach had the inherent serenity of Brahms. But, because Bach's serenity was shared by nearly all the prominent artists of his age, and is characteristic of that age, one cannot help wondering how his genius would have shaped in a period of *sturm und drang*.

XII

THESE reflections lead to the question: which was the greatest composer? Was it Bach, or Beethoven, or Wagner? When I limit the inquiry to those three names I am voicing an almost universal opinion. But, as the universality of an opinion makes no good reason why an independent individual should hold it, I must confess that it is my view of the case. These three seem to me to stand out above all the rest, just as Shakespeare, Molière and Goethe stand out above all other dramatic poets since the days of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Some, I am aware, would add Mozart to the list. Samuel Butler considered Handel the greatest of musicians, and many years ago I knew others who expressed the same view; and that opinion (which is not to be dismissed lightly), may find upholders even at the present day. A small number regard Chopin as one of the supreme artists; and, again, there is some reason for that view. Palestrina finds a few advocates; so does Brahms. And finally it has been suggested that the claims of Scriabine must be considered.

Now, there are two ways of judging music. You can judge it by studying the score; or you can judge it by the impression it leaves upon you when you know it. Being an amateur, unable to gauge the value of any work of music from contemplating it on paper, I have to base my judgment on the impression it makes upon me. I have had enough

experience, however, to reject first impressions. I must know a work pretty intimately before I will pass judgment on it.

Such being the case, I have to leave Scriabine aside, because, deeply though his music has impressed me, I am not intimately acquainted with his works. For exactly the same reason I can state no opinion about Palestrina. Chopin I know as well as any composer. The better I know his works, the more astonishing does his genius appear to me. But I exclude him because his range was so small. I have never looked upon Brahms as in the running. He is not " a tedious homilist," as Bernard Shaw called him ; but his music, though beautiful on the whole, seems to have sprung too much from the mind, and too little from the soul. One almost feels that Brahms carefully shut the door on passion before he sat down to compose anything. Handel I cannot regard as equal to Bach ; and therefore it seems idle to me to compare him with Beethoven and Wagner.

Only Mozart is left. I must confess that Mozart has always proved a tremendous obstacle to the segregation of my supreme trio. If he is not their equal, the space that separates him from them is but a hair's breadth. But perhaps there is one element present in the music of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner, which is not so conspicuous in that of Mozart. It might be called grandeur or majesty, or, still better, force. There is a touch of the colossal in their music, which Mozart does not quite achieve. In every other respect I am bound to admit that he is the equal of each and all of them.

And now as to the three—which is the greatest ? If my life depended on naming one I should say Bach. But it is really an impossible point to decide. When

I have been listening to *Tristan* or *Die Meistersinger*, Wagner seems to dwarf creation. But when I hear a great performance of the Ninth Symphony the figure of Beethoven fills the heavens. The *St. Matthew Passion* in its turn will convince me of the supremacy of Bach. And perhaps there is to be found in the music of Bach a uniform excellence not altogether matched by the others. Their utmost level may have been as high as his ; but I think that possibly his was more consistently maintained.

That is how the matter appears to an amateur. That is a judgment based on impressions. The professional musician must assuredly find the matter much more difficult to decide, because each of these three great composers utilised, generally speaking, a different form of expression. It is as if a literary man were asked to decide upon the respective merits of a poet, a novelist, and a playwright—say Alfred de Musset, Flaubert, and Rostand. On what basis is one to compare the music-dramas of Wagner with the symphonies and sonatas of Beethoven ; or either with the organ preludes and fugues of Bach ? The wise musician will, no doubt, decide that all three are exactly equal, and leave the matter at that.

XIII

The Promenades confirmed my musical appreciation, and gave me the beginnings of a sense of musical proportion. They were also an enjoyable experience. I liked their rather Bohemian, pipe-smoking atmosphere. That is speaking metaphorically. Speaking materially I came in the course of time to dislike the mixed aroma of pipe, cigarette and cigar smoke, hanging heavily in the exhausted air. I began to find it too overpowering; and I could no longer enjoy music under those conditions. Moreover I became more fastidious in my tastes. I preferred the higher standard of performance vouchsafed in the Symphony concerts, the result of more exhaustive rehearsal. At the latter kind of concert one heard also the greater pianists, violinists, 'cellists, and singers.

It was a matter of education. That happy combination of music and tobacco was educative. Now, in my school and university days I studied such classical authors as Cæsar, Xenophon, Virgil, Horace, Euripides, Plato, and Tacitus. They were read, not as works of literature, but as problems of language; not for the purpose of imbibing history, legend, and philosophy, but for that of mastering the Attic and Latin tongues. There came a time when they were thankfully discarded together with the problems and theorems of Euclid and other educational lumber. But afterwards they took a different shape in my

memory; they ceased to be school books and assumed the character of literature; and I was enabled to return to them with a new appreciation and understanding.

In music my experience has been somewhat similar; the difference being that education in this case combined itself with pleasure. But to the multitudinous works to which I listened with perhaps more joy than comprehension in my promenading days, I have been able, for that very reason, to return subsequently with an appreciative understanding, which otherwise I might never have possessed.

Between that tobacco-and-music period, and my more enlightened age of music without tobacco there was an interlude, the circumstances of which enabled me to bridge the chasm without difficulty. I found myself for a while behind the scenes, and helping to give concerts, as well as helping to provide an audience for them. And, incidentally, I came under the influence of a very magnetic musical personality.

My fortunes took me away from these shores to the other side of the world; and I spent three years in Australia, having my headquarters in Melbourne, the twin capital of that rich but empty continent. Apart from the fact that it has produced one of the greatest of operatic *divas*, Melbourne will hardly be associated in the minds of English people with music. It will bring to your mind visions possibly of cricket contests of inordinate length and stubbornness; or, if you have read the stories of Rolf Boldrewood or the verses of Lindsay Gordon, of bearded gold diggers in red shirts and slouch hats quenching a gargantuan thirst in noisy and dangerous saloons, or of daring gentlemen jockeys steeplechasing over improvised

race-courses. You will know at all events (if you know anything of Australia) that Sydney, not Melbourne, has been the centre of the intellectual life of that country.

But every Australian knows that Melbourne is, or was, the only centre of music worth mentioning in Australia ; and nearly every Australian knows why.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century, Mr. G. W. L. Marshall-Hall sailed to Australia, having been invited to take command at the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music. Being no "dryasdust" professor, but an artist to the marrow, he began at once to teach music as it should be taught—as a natural and beautiful form of expressing human emotions and ideas. Not George Grove himself inculcated more earnestly and passionately in his pupils the true meaning of music.

But Marshall-Hall happened to have his knife into a certain respectable and respected section of society, and, being a downright and volatile person, did not hesitate to express his views with vehemence. He was not content to air them in private conversation ; but he worked them into poems which were published. Unmusical respectability was instantly up in arms, and the professor had to resign his university position.

So there was this energetic and enthusiastic artist high and dry in Australia with no work for his hands to do.

But he had rich and powerful friends. They installed him in a new conservatoire of his own, and they gathered together an orchestra, mainly professional, and invited him to give an annual series of symphony concerts. In the intellectual and artistic life of Australia this was an event of historical importance. Australians hitherto had had to content

themselves with amateurish, improvised orchestras, directed by amateurish, improvised conductors, the kind of thing one might find in small provincial towns in England. And suddenly Melbourne found itself in possession of something like the Leipzig Gewandhaus ; a full-fledged orchestra collected from all quarters, and a conductor endowed with ideas and ambition. What Mendelssohn once had done for Leipzig and all North Germany, Marshall-Hall now did for Melbourne and all Australia. Letting no difficulty stand in his way (and the difficulties were great and numerous), he gave to the Australian people all that was best in music. Taking the great classics as a basis, he introduced them to Wagner and Brahms, to Berlioz and Liszt, to the Russians, to Strauss, César Franck and Debussy. He had an untrained public to educate ; and he went to work on an educative principle, thoroughly familiarising them with one school of thought before he brought them into contact with another. By the time I came out to Australia, the Marshall-Hall concerts had been established for several years, and their repertory included all the music which was available and came within the scope of the orchestral players.

At my first Marshall-Hall concert the *pièce de résistance* was Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. I went to that concert expecting to hear an amateurish performance, not comparable in any way with the kind of thing one heard at the Queen's Hall or Albert Hall in London. Before half the first movement of the Pastoral had been played I knew that I had never heard anything to match this before. I felt that for the first time I was hearing that music as it must have taken shape in the mind of Beethoven. It was not that the orchestra was anything out of the

ordinary. The virtue of the performance lay in the conductor's interpretation. There is, perhaps, no better test of a conductor's interpretive powers than that opening *allegro* of the Pastoral. Many otherwise unimpeachable conductors have, in my experience, come to grief over it, making it too classical, or too noisy, or too sentimental, and suggestive of anything rather than man's instinctive love of nature. But Marshall-Hall's interpretation was completely satisfying. After hearing many more of these concerts I came to the conclusion that Marshall-Hall was one of the first conductors of his time; and nothing in my subsequent experience has shaken that opinion in any way.

Marshall-Hall died during the second year of the Great War; and the English-speaking world was certainly unaware that it had lost one of its greatest interpreters of music: one who stood as far above Wood and Beecham as Wood and Beecham stood above Stanford and Bridge. A high creative talent is often unexplainable. A high interpretive talent is seldom so. Marshall-Hall was a born artist, who had received a scientific training. A romantic temperament was balanced in him by a keen analytical faculty. He could study a work of art not only critically, but creatively, taking it to pieces, as it were, and re-constructing it. He was as literary as he was musical, as philosophical as he was literary. His deficiencies were many (else, indeed, he would not have been an artist of any worth); but they affected him detrimentally only in his creative work, and never as an interpreter. He could never be a great creative artist because he had not cultivated, and, I suppose, could not cultivate "the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love." The

contemplation of other men's works steadied his mind and called his best faculties into play. Released from that anchorage, he was apt to run wild, and to air his less disciplined sentiments with reckless vigour.

It became perfectly plain to me that among British conductors he stood in a class by himself. His enthusiastic Australian supporters were hardly aware of this, greatly though they admired him ; for they had no one else with whom to compare him. In England he was practically unknown. I greatly desired that he should become known in England, and demolish for good and all the utterly irrational tradition that this country was incapable of producing a great interpreter of music. But, before any steps could be taken to bring this about, Marshall-Hall was dead.

As an illustration of the principles on which he went to work, I may quote his method of interpreting Tchaikovski's Fantaisie Ouverture, *Romeo and Juliet*. He had no great love for Tchaikovski's music, of which he could discern the essential superficiality ; but this particular piece aroused his admiration. It astonished him that the author of the Fourth Symphony and the " 1812 " Overture could have created so beautiful a tone poem. The piece being new to him, he set to work to study it carefully. Being convinced that Tchaikovski had found direct inspiration in Shakespeare's tragedy, Marshall-Hall read the music in the light of Shakespeare, and interpreted it in that light. As I am one of those who consider that music can, and often does, express something more than itself, this seems to me an excellent illustration of the principles on which the interpreter of music should go to work. Tchaikovski might have

called that particular piece "Diogenes and Alexander," or "Chamonix and Mont Blanc"; but, as a matter of fact he called it "Romeo and Juliet." He had some reason for choosing that title. The reason was that he intended that music to illustrate Shakespeare's poetic drama. That poetic drama was, therefore, the basis of the music. To interpret the music adequately it was necessary, therefore, that the conductor should fully understand and appreciate the poem. Thus expressed, the matter stands to reason. But for all that, I have often heard that particular piece performed in a manner suggestive of Kipling rather than Shakespeare.

The Melbourne orchestra, unhappily, was not a very reliable organisation. Great difficulty was experienced in keeping it together. The wood-wind players were weak; and very inefficient substitutes from the conservatorium and elsewhere had to be raked in to replace truant professionals. Ambitious programmes had sometimes to be watered down at the last moment. But, with all those disadvantages, the performances were often a lesson to the famous orchestras of England. Not long after my return from Australia I heard a performance of Berlioz at the Queen's Hall so rough and ragged that the Melbourne people would have been ashamed to offer it to the public; and the hand of no less a person than Richter was wielding the *bâton*. And many a time subsequently I have heard famous orchestras muddle their way through long passages, and eminent conductors direct the performance of well-known works with either a wooden misunderstanding of the spirit actuating them, or an irritating insistence on superfluous, illegitimate and often vulgar effects. And when the audience greeted such performances

with loud applause I would feel inclined to say to myself: "Well, my friends, if you had attended the Melbourne concerts, you would not tolerate this sort of thing." Subsequently, however, I have been driven to the conclusion that the majority of people who patronise concerts will tolerate anything, as long as the labels are all in order.

To me it was as illuminating to listen to orchestral music conducted by Marshall-Hall, as to piano music played by Paderewski or Sauer, or to 'cello music played by Casals. But, as time went on, I gained the additional advantage of discussing music (among and in relation to numerous other subjects) with Marshall-Hall himself; and as Marshall-Hall knew music far too thoroughly to sentimentalise about it, these discussions were quite as illuminating as the concerts. I began at that time to distinguish between that music which was properly called great, and that which was merely good in the sense of not being trivial or vulgar; and it began also to be clear to me how immensely important in music was the art of interpretation. I acquired, in fact, a sense of values. And that sense, once acquired, is never lost.

I saw Marshall-Hall again a few years later, when he came to England, not to exercise his unique talent as a conductor of orchestras, but to produce his opera, *Stella*. It was a tragic ending to his career. The opera was, musically, not without value; but the libretto written by Marshall-Hall was impossible —a confession to the whole world of the weaker side of his character. After endless bargaining he succeeded in having it staged at a London music-hall, as an item in an ordinary variety performance. To the best of my recollection it was sandwiched in between

a lady (in rouge) who warbled to the moon, and a gentleman (in lamp black) who warbled about it. The audience consisted chiefly of the sort of people who would like to hear ladies and gentlemen warbling to and about the moon. There was the ordinary music-hall orchestra ; and the singers, though good of their kind, were not operatic artists of a high order. Marshall-Hall, ill and unhappy, sat at the conductor's desk. The audience, as soon as it discovered that the music was not ordinary tinkle-tinkle, and that nobody had anything to say about the moon, decided that *Stella* was to be treated as a dull interlude in an otherwise agreeable entertainment, and engaged itself in miscellaneous chatter. But, when at the end of half-an-hour the curtain had not rung down on *Stella*, it began to grow restive, and to abuse the management of the music-hall for staging such a thing. It was an utterly melancholy and tragic affair.

I never saw Marshall-Hall again. He was re-appointed to the musical chair at Melbourne University, and returned there almost at once. Rather more than a year later he was dead.

XIV

He was, as I have said, the first of British conductors. It was not while I was in Melbourne that I formed that opinion, but afterwards, when I was back in England, and had resumed my regular concert-going in London. I do not say that he was in every respect the equal of Richter, Nikisch, Kussevitski and Weingartner. The two former were, the two latter are superb interpreters, each different from the rest, but all equally wonderful. I have experienced great moments too in the presence of Mengelberg and Safonov. But I should hesitate to say that Marshall-Hall was their inferior. Names have a marvellous magic. In the world of music those names are household words; that of Marshall-Hall is not. The difference between him and them may amount to no more than that. One requires a very clear judgment to overcome the prejudice of names.

Marshall-Hall's action was quiet. He indulged in no physical gymnastics. Some critics lay much stress on that matter. To me it is one of perfect indifference. I judge the merits of a conductor by the kind of results which he elicits from the orchestra. He may stand on his head and conduct with his legs for all I care, so long as the musical effect is what I desire to hear. And if all concert-goers would bear in mind that the conductor is there to conduct, not the audience, but the orchestra, they might learn to consider this matter with a clearer

judgment than they show as a rule at the present time. Too often the most rapturous applause goes to the conductor who displays the greatest physical energy, quite regardless of the way in which the music is interpreted.

I have allotted to Marshall-Hall a higher position than I would allow to those eminent English conductors, Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir Henry Wood. Beecham is brilliant (no living conductor more so), but variable. At his best he is splendid, electrifying; at his worst an ordinary bandmaster. His is a severe and lofty standard of musical probity; and any work which falls short of his standard he conducts without enthusiasm. This is regrettable, for it prevents him from being numbered, as otherwise he would be, among the greatest interpreters of orchestral music. Sir Henry Wood is a much greater conductor than he used to be. At the present day he is, on the whole, the best conductor we have. I would not place Marshall-Hall very far above the Wood of the present day; and when I drew my comparison it was really with the Wood of the years when I heard the Marshall-Hall concerts. So rarely have I heard the Queen's Hall orchestra of late that I can make no attempt to trace the progress of Wood from ordinary merit to real eminence; but the same fact has made that progress startlingly apparent to me. Sir Henry Wood to-day is a great conductor; and one wishes that he had more scope than is given to him at present. One would like to hear the St. Matthew Passion under his direction, and Wagner's music-dramas. We could be assured of notable performances.

If I had to name a third English conductor of real distinction I should pitch my choice on Sir Dan

Godfrey of the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra. He enjoys, it is true, the advantage of having under him an almost perfect orchestra ; but as its perfection is mainly due to his own efforts the fact, far from detracting from his distinction, adds to it. Of certain works his interpretation is beautiful and faultless ; and these include those purely classical compositions, such as the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, which, in my opinion, provide the most searching test of a conductor's artistic merit. Any musician, it seems to me, could do justice to works such as Liszt's symphonic poems, or Dvořák's symphonies, if he had a good orchestra under him ; but pure music such as that of Haydn and Mozart is as difficult for a conductor, as for a pianist or violinist, to interpret adequately. Sir Dan Godfrey does interpret it adequately ; and he does the same for the symphonies of Brahms and Schubert ; for Elgar's music ; and for the earlier works of Wagner, if not his later ones. His concerts undoubtedly provide the highest level of orchestral performance to be found in England at the present day.

Several years have passed since I heard an orchestra conducted by Sir Landon Ronald ; but in the days when he and the New Symphony Orchestra used to give periodical symphony concerts at the Queen's Hall I was impressed and pleased by the unfailing soundness and orthodoxy of his work. He never electrified, but he almost invariably satisfied. Conductors far more celebrated than Ronald, such, for instance, as Nikisch and Mengelberg, have given me palpable misinterpretations of familiar and even famous works ; but nothing of the sort ever occurred with Ronald. And when one goes to a concert to hear familiar and famous works, it is something to

feel assured that they will be strongly and soundly interpreted, and that no unpardonable liberties will be taken with them. I did not often go to the celebrated Sunday concerts at the Albert Hall, however, because I was never attracted by seeing an orchestra play without hearing it; which is even less satisfactory than hearing it without seeing it.

We have many other distinguished conductors, of whom Eugene Goossens is the most distinguished. I must know the "port and paces" of that conductor better than I do before I attempt to criticise him. He is an interesting composer; and one would like to see this country produce a really great composer-conductor—an English Gustav Mahler.

That scent, however, I must refrain from following up. It threatens to lead me into a morass of profitless speculations.

XV

In pursuance of my original idea I must leave these great and distinguished directors of orchestras, and return to my unimportant self. I have gone too far ahead of my musical education ; and it behoves me to revert to that slow and painful process, which has led me from a thoughtless delight in tinkle-tinkle to something like a confession of faith in the musical supremacy of Bach. Some step, as you might say!

In my promenading days it was inconceivable to me that works of a smaller compass could have the same significance as orchestral works. I took it for granted that Beethoven's sonatas, for example, were lesser works than his symphonies. The rich, sonorous and varied tones of the full orchestra are quick and direct in their sensuous and emotional appeal. In that respect the only serious rival to the orchestra is the grand organ. It is for this reason that orchestral music attracts far greater audiences than chamber music.

To every regular attendant at orchestral concerts there comes, however, a time when orchestral effects cease to have any novelty, and the simpler effects often appear the more beautiful. It is then that the sweetness of Dvořák may begin to take on a sickly flavour, and the lightness of Grieg to float away into the thin air of actual levity. "The captains and the kings depart," but the masters remain.

But now it begins to occur to the seeker after an ever elusive beauty that his quest may be found in a serener atmosphere, and that big orchestration is only one of many means to the composer's hand. When, for example, the *Siegfried Idyll* and *L'Après midi d'une faune* sound much more beautiful than *Tod und Verklärung* and the *Symphonie Pathétique*, it becomes possible by an almost automatic process of reasoning to infer the likelihood of a charm still clearer, simpler and more direct in Schubert's Octet, or the String Quartet of Debussy.

That sounds plausible at any rate. But, when I come to think of it, I have my doubts whether I did follow that automatic process of reasoning. I seem, rather, to recollect a friend in my Melbourne days, who urged me to attend the performances of the Melbourne String Quartet, which consisted of members of the Marshall-Hall Orchestra; and that I went; and that on the very first occasion they played Schubert's *Tod und das Mädchen* variations, which so entranced me that I became a regular *habitué* of those concerts. But although I became well acquainted with much of the best chamber music in that form, I remained for a long time tied to the illusion that orchestral music was necessarily much more important and significant.

Afterwards there came to Melbourne that most capricious of pianists, Mark Hambourg, who gave us a Beethoven recital on an occasion when he happened to be in his best form; and he played the *Waldstein* Sonata and the A Flat (Funeral March) Sonata in a manner that can only be described as inspired. That recital opened my eyes a bit. I began really to perceive that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamed of in the philosophy of a

promenader. It occurred to me that Beethoven (to take a single example) *had* written a few other works besides his nine symphonies and half-dozen orchestral overtures ; and that, in fact, in a list of his compositions the works written for full orchestra occupied only a very small space.

These events were but signs and portents. Two years before I went out to Australia I was an ardent and regular concert-goer ; in fact I was too ardent and too regular, being somewhat intoxicated by music at that time. Had I then been offered the choice between a concert, of which the programme consisted of Dvořák's American Symphony, Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite, and Wagner's *Kaisermarsch,* and one where Beethoven's E Flat Septet, and the Clarinet Quintet of Brahms were to be played, I should have chosen the former without hesitation. Two years after my return from Australia I should have hesitated. At the present day I would unhesitatingly go and hear the latter programme. And in making that selection I know that I should be the gainer, inasmuch as I should hear better and more significant music. But, quite apart from that, I should enjoy myself much more, and be the recipient of pleasanter sensations. He who once took a lively pleasure in *Marmion* and *The Lays of Ancient Rome* may come in course of time to derive a pleasure much more vital from the sonnets and odes of Keats. But the cases are not quite parallel. Every lover of letters passes through such changes of heart in the course of his career ; for in his case the heart is governed by the intellect, that organ of ruthless discrimination. The heart of the music lover is not always guided by his intellect, but sometimes remains fettered to the emotions. For

that reason many lovers of music can never escape from the thrall of the sonorous orchestra. Music without sonority has for them no meaning—is too faint and gentle to be intelligible. Assuredly such people lose far more than they gain.

Quite apart from the countless masterpieces written for solo instruments, or for small groups of instruments, it is in chamber music that the highest virtuosity is encountered; it is there that those great artists who excel in the direct interpretation of music are heard on their own ground. It is my opinion that the great soloists are never heard to perfection contending against an orchestral accompaniment. I do not say that certain concertos are not beautiful works, and that to hear them well performed is not a great pleasure. Bach's Violin Concerto in E is a very beautiful work; so is Haydn's 'Cello Concerto; so is Beethoven's Piano Concerto in G. And their performance by such artists as Kreisler, Casals, and Emil Sauer is something not readily forgotten. But yet, as I think, if you want to be made fully conscious of the power possessed by such artists as these, and by many of their *confrères*, you must hear them against a less formidable background in works of simpler and more delicate proportions.

I call to mind a series of trio concerts given some fifteen years ago in London by Kreisler, Casals, and Harold Bauer. Those trios had been carefully selected—I think twelve were performed altogether in three concerts. They represented the highest endeavour of their authors, who included Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Tchaikovski. The performances themselves were faultless. The listener was bathed in

the waters of delight. It was a feast of the senses, at which the intellect was an honoured guest.

That was a very high level of performance. I had almost added, " as the names would indicate." But the great virtuosi are not always happy in company with one another. They may sometimes resemble the proverbial army which consists entirely of expert military theorists, each disposed to follow up his own plan of campaign regardless of all the others. The ideal rendering of chamber music of the concerted sort is more usually provided by a small band of artists, none of whom is individually a supreme virtuoso, but who, by always playing together with perfect mutual confidence and understanding, achieve a combined virtuosity equal to that of the best of soloists. The Rosé Quartet from Vienna, which played regularly in London during the years immediately preceding the war, was an example of this perfect *ensemble*. You never heard of any of the four apart from their quartet playing ; but their quartet playing was superb. Not only was it clean and beautifully balanced, but in sympathy and expressiveness it matched the highest class of solo performance. And in more recent years the Lener Quartet has equalled, and perhaps excelled, their level of execution.

But the highest level of all was reached by those two great artists, Ysaye and Pugno, when they performed all the Beethoven violin sonatas in a series of concerts : Pugno the ideal interpreter of classical music on the piano ; Ysaye perhaps the greatest soloist of his time on any instrument. One may recall the interesting description given by Arthur Symons of the *Kreutzer* Sonata as played by Ysaye with Busoni ; and how their temperaments seemed

to him to clash and be at variance. But Ysaye and Pugno played together as one soul. It was impossible for the listener to realise that two individual minds and temperaments were at work. A mystic might have supposed that the spirit of Beethoven himself had taken possession of the two artists, and was guiding their fingers.

That was one of the times when the figure of Beethoven seemed to me to fill the heavens, and I thought it inconceivable that a greater composer than Beethoven could ever have lived.

XVI

MANY concert-goers, I daresay, have shared my experience—not that which I have just described, but that which I am about to mention. In the beginning they have had no real faculty of appraising merit. They have acknowledged this or that artist to be great on the strength of his reputation, without being able really to judge. When you have been told that A is a great virtuoso ; when the virtuosity of A has been preached at you pontifically ; you are apt to come into A's presence already impressed with his greatness. If as a matter of fact A is a great artist (as is highly probable ; for reputations do not build themselves on air) : it does not matter very much ; for he will confirm the impression in due course, and all will be well. But if he is not a great artist your misconception concerning him may throw your judgment severely out of balance, and make it difficult for you to estimate the merits of other artists.

I fell into a few errors of that description in the early days, and persisted in them, to my great confusion, for some years. But in the end I had to succumb to what our learned leader-writers would call the inexorable logic of facts. In one instance, however, I have cause to pat myself on the back ; for some years before he became famous I observed and commented on the fine virtuosity and interpretative ability displayed by Albert Sammons, one of the

truest artists who ever handled a bow. It is true that I coupled his name at the time with that of a young baritone who vanished thenceforward from the public eye; but I was right, at any rate, about Sammons, whose name was quite unknown to me when first I heard him play. As a violinist I should rate him equal to that admirable French artist, Thibaud, whose style of playing resembles his own. I prefer either of them to Mischa Elman; but that is purely a matter of taste, for Elman is the equal of both—possibly the superior of both—in technique, and a fine artist in other respects.

Tennyson said of Swinburne that in his mind all thoughts turned to music. It may be said of Kreisler that under his hand all music turns to poetry. He is the supreme troubadour or minstrel of the age. He plucks from all music the utmost romance that it contains, and with an easy, careless gesture, as of one doing the most ordinary things, flings it to us in rich garlands of beauty. In speaking of him it is difficult to resist the use of superlatives. Such art as his demands a special vocabulary of praise. The greatest music is magnified by his touch; the trivial becomes a thing of beauty and wonder.

And yet I have called Ysaye the greatest soloist of his time on any instrument. Could any art excel the art of Kreisler? Yes, Ysaye's; for Ysaye has struck a deeper note. When Kreisler plays, that which he plays becomes Kreisler. When Ysaye plays, Mozart and Beethoven live again. Kreisler captures them; they capture Ysaye. For that reason—as all other things are equal—as they possess the same skill, and display the same degree of what, for want of a better word, we call soul—I give the premier place to Ysaye, the perfect and faultless

interpreter. When Kreisler plays a Mozart concerto, one feels that it has become the vehicle of his self-expression ; but when Ysaye plays it, one feels that, had his impulses borne him in that direction, he might have created it.

But for this very reason—because he throws himself so completely into the music he plays—Ysaye could never convert the lesser works of music into glowing rhapsodies, as Kreisler can. There Kreisler has had no equal within living memory, and you might have to go back to Paganini to find his match. So slight a thing as Tchaikovski's little *Chant sans Paroles* becomes, when Kreisler plays it, a sublime and passionate song. The sublimity and passion are not in the music, but in Kreisler's art. And that, it must be owned, is very wonderful.

With these two names I would link that of Pablo Casals, an interpreter after the manner of Ysaye, who has chosen as his vehicle of expression that most beautiful of instruments, the 'cello. From no other instrument can such warmth of tone-colour be extracted. It is to the violin what the male voice is to the female. Casals has explored its utmost possibilities, not merely in the matter of technique, in which others have been his equals (Holman, for example) but as a medium of clear and beautiful interpretation. When he plays Bach's suites for the unaccompanied 'cello he endows the art of the virtuoso with a new dignity. The classics in his hands are classical in the truest sense of the word ; his manner is Corinthic, uncorrupted by Roman vulgarity. In brilliance of execution and purity of tone Suggia is his equal ; but neither she, nor any other 'cellist has ever matched his art. Suggia, however, deserves our special homage ; for she stands

as far above all other feminine artists as Teresa Carreño did in her day. And need we wonder that from that Iberian race, which has given us Sarasate, Casals, Arbos, Carreño, and Suggia, there is emerging some of the most interesting music of the modern period? It is a matter, rather, for surprise that we have had to wait so long for a master from the land of Murillo, Velasquez and Cervantes.

XVII

As a solo artist the pianist stands in a different category from the player of any other instrument of the concert-room ; and in a different category from the organist. Music played by the violin, the 'cello, or the wood-wind instruments demands, or implies an accompaniment. In actual fact, or in our minds, it does not stand by itself. In itself it is incomplete ; and either its creator provides it with an harmonic background rendered on some other instrument or instruments, or else that harmonic background shapes itself in our fancies when we listen to it. But the piano, like the organ, is complete and sufficient in itself. Unlike the organ, however, it is capable of producing only one, or at the most, two tones. The organ, indeed, in the hands of a master, can rival the full orchestra in sonority and variety of tone-colour ; and some say that it can outrival the orchestra. That point I am not prepared to discuss, for my experience of great organ-playing is scattered and limited ; and the efforts of worthy mediocrity will hardly serve to illustrate the argument. I am concerned at the present moment with the pianoforte, which, *pace* Bernard Shaw and other critics of distinction, is a finer instrument than the virginals, harpsichords and spinets which preceded it because it is far more expressive than any of them ; and it is because it is a finer instrument that it has superseded

them. For the same reason it superseded the sweeter-toned clavichord, which Bach and Mozart esteemed so highly. It is safe to say that if such an instrument as the Pleyel or Steinway grand pianoforte had existed in the seventeenth century, the great masters of that time would have composed the bulk of their music for it, instead of for the weaker and thinner-toned instruments then in use ; and it is equally safe to say that those obsolete instruments are as unsuitable as a medium for the rendering of such works as Beehoven's later sonatas, as the sailing ships of those days would be for working the mail service between Southampton and New York.

To judge of pianistic virtuosity you must hear the pianist in works composed for the piano alone, not because such works necessarily call for a higher skill, or a greater musicianship than do the piano parts in concerted pieces, or even the accompaniments of vocal works, but because the piano and the pianist compel in this case your undivided attention, into which no other considerations need enter. Until you have heard the pianist play without any orchestral, or other harmonic or melodic background, it is impossible to form a just estimate of his art.

For every one brilliant violinist there are at least half-a-dozen brilliant pianists. The Ysayes, the Kreislers, the Thibauds stand out readily enough. It is less easy to discriminate with nicety from among the scores of pianists, the excellence of whose art proclaims itself so strikingly to the listener ; and, before naming my own conclusions on the matter, I feel it necessary to indulge in a little classification.

To begin with, there is the meritorious kind of pianist who figures at the Promenade Concerts, and on Sunday afternoons, gives a few recitals every

year, and usually teaches a number of pupils ; whose technique is distinguished ; who interprets in a conscientious and musicianly way ; who deserves every kind of musical good conduct prize : but yet fails to leave with the listener any true impression of greatness. This country has provided us with numerous pianists of this description, who show a singular uniformity of " all but " excellence. You know, when you hear them, that they are not masters ; and you do not quite know why they should not be, or precisely what gift of mind or soul is lacking in them.

By degrees, as you attend concerts and recitals, you begin to pick out the master pianists from such as these, even though the latter very often display more respect to the works they interpret than the masters do. The master is sometimes a superbly careless person, and sometimes a tremendously impudent person. Genius does not readily embrace conscientiousness, save in those rare instances where it is begotten of a profound sense of right and wrong. But the vagaries of the careless or impudent master do retard and complicate in the listener the task of acquiring a sense of values. This applies not only to the art of piano playing, but to every branch of musical performance—indeed to every branch of artistic effort. Bernard Shaw, for example, has on many occasions succeeded in disguising his genius pretty thoroughly ; and Victor Hugo was even more successful in that respect. If you knew those authors by certain of their works alone, their reputation as great men would astonish you. Had I never heard any music conducted by Richter, except the Berlioz piece which I mentioned as having been so sadly disfigured under his guidance, I should have wondered

whence he had derived his reputation as " the prince of conductors." I have observed lapses from grace even in Kreisler and Casals.

In the end these lapses signify nothing. To discover genius you must look, not for uniform merit, which gives you Addison, Vandyke, and Cherubini, but for moments of intense inspiration, frequent as in the case of Shakespeare, Turner, and Beethoven, or variable and intermittent as in that of Byron, Romney and Schumann. And, as with the creative, so it is with the interpretative artists.

It is because the truest genius is so apt to be irregular in its manifestations that many critics award the palm of merit to those great intellectual pianists, or thinkers at the keyboard, who interpret the masterpieces of music with a massive and uniform sobriety. In my opinion Busoni was the grand example of this school of musical interpretation. He was magnificent, but it was a cold magnificence like that of a whitewashed English cathedral with its plain glass windows and grey light. He gave you the impression that the creators of great music were terrible, frowning gods, who had never laughed, but had spent their time hurling thunderbolts charged with relentless thought. He seemed to read in Beethoven's music (of which many held him to be the greatest interpreter), the spirit not of Schiller but of Hegel. It was awe-inspiring, it was magnificent ; but was it true music ?

Now, the question which concerns Busoni and painists of that school is one which concerns all art. Which is the greater genius, that of Wordsworth, or that of Keats and Shelley ? Euripides or Aeschylus, Aristotle or Plato, which is the master ? Was Busoni the greatest pianist of modern times, or does that

distinction belong to some artist of a totally different stamp—Paderewski, for example, or Vladimir de Pachmann ?

Art, to my mind, should epitomise or reflect life. The essence of life is warmth. We are children, not of the moon or the stars, but of the warm sun, which is the source of all vitality. Art, which does not express that, ultimately expresses nothing ; at least so it seems to me.

When Paderewski or Pachmann interprets music we become aware of this element of warmth. The music as they play it lives and speaks, tells of the joys and sorrows of life, is essentially human. They may fill you with feelings of wonder, but they never fill you with feelings of awe. You wonder that any single human being can, of his own unaided efforts, make music so beautiful ; and you wonder at their matchless delicacy of touch. And these are the pianists whom I should put before all others. They differ greatly from one another in the details of their art, but in the essentials they are alike. They have played Keats and Shelley to the Wordsworth of Busoni.

The art of Paderewski, and that of Pachmann have been described, aptly and ineptly, by so many pens, that I will refrain from adding anything to this shadowy description. I will only mention that, for years before I ever heard Pachmann play, he was represented to me as a trifler, a buffoon, who played Chopin morbidly and everything else badly, a ladies' pianist, an unpardonable offender against all the highest canons of art. What the highest canons of art were was never made clear to me in those days ; but I have since come to recognise them as prejudices deep-rooted in the souls of pedants. My prejudice

against Pachmann, being nothing so holy as a highest canon of art, melted away the first time I heard him play; and after the second audition his art had established itself in my mind as a true criterion of excellence, by which I might henceforth judge the art of others.

It almost follows from these remarks that I am an admirer of Cortot, that most poetic of interpreters, who as a reader of Chopin is the equal of Pachmann, and as a reader of Schumann has no equal at all; and has revealed to us the exquisite grace and charm of Debussy's music. Another pianist of the human and poetic school, for whom I have always felt the warmest admiration, is Emil Sauer, who finds his "spiritual home" in the music of Beethoven. His playing of Beethoven's Sonata in A flat (Opus 110, not the early one) is one of the musical events which stand out prominently in my memory, though it happened in the far off pre-war days.

When, in defiance of the virtuous principles of the Ridgley family, I "turn to a musician and a pianoforte for healing and consolation," such are the artists who attract me. I will not say that the intellectual pianists—(the term is fairly adequate to describe them)—repel me. Indeed, they compel my admiration because of the force and power which they impart to everything they touch. But when they have finished playing I know no more about the music than I did when they began. Music is of one nature with romance. They spring from the same impulse in man, the same need. The secret of musical interpretation lies in inspiration, not thought; or, to be more exact, thought, in this matter, must be subservient to inspiration. But inspiration is thought intensified, quickened, clarified.

In the truest sense the most poetical interpreters of music are also the most intellectual.

There is a third, but less significant school among the major pianists, consisting of hard, brilliant players of astounding technical ability, with very little else in their artistic composition. They are entertaining enough so long as they are given hard and brilliant music to play ; but their exact, meaningless rendering of the more vital kind of music is one of the most irritating experiences the concert-goer has to endure.

And among the minor artists, who bring joy to the ingenuous promenader and the patron of Sunday league entertainments, each of these three schools finds its representatives. He who can distinguish clearly between one type and another is well on the way to becoming a discriminating judge of music.

XVIII

Recitals of pianoforte music have had a special attraction for me for many years past, the reason being that I myself am a pianist. For, what is a pianist ? One who renders music upon a pianoforte. The definition does not specify that this rendering shall be made with the hands ; any more than the definition of a sailor specifies that he shall sail under canvas. I render music upon a pianoforte and am, therefore, a pianist. But I do it with my feet instead of my hands.

This confession may shock the elect, despite the fact that the leg-operated pianoforte has been "endorsed" by innumerable musical celebrities ranging from Paderewski to Cécile Chaminade. The elect will say that from the lower extremities of man no musical good can arise. Also they will say, "Here is a fellow who admits that he received lessons in piano playing from an elderly teacher in the days of his youth. But he is too lazy to read music from the score, or to practise the art of fingering ; and he just pedals with his feet, and exacts mechanical reproductions of works of music from perforated paper rolls, an accomplishment attainable by any barbarian without a note of music in his head."

I sympathise with the elect. It costs a member of the elect some pains to achieve a passable rendering of such a work as Chopin's Polonaise in E Flat Minor. It costs me nothing but pleasure. And it is not

improbable that in the end my gladsome feet produce a more agreeable rendering than the painful hands of the elect. But there is another side to the question.

Had I acted virtuously—had I kept myself riveted to the lofty principles which govern the elect in all their actions, I should, at the end of this long and toilsome period, have been able to play Schumann's *Northern Song*, Mendelssohn's *Confidence* and *Consolation*, and perhaps a few of Beethoven's youthful Sonatinas and Bagatelles with tolerable correctness and feeling. I might conceivably have run to Grieg's *Bridal March* and Tchaikovski's *Chanson Triste*. For my training in the art of piano-playing was neither intensive nor extensive. I should have been hardly competent to play a hymn in three sharps on the American organ in a country church. And the elect would have scorned me utterly. (They may be described, these elect, as people of a superior species indigenous in that red brick flat district which Barrie has so charmingly designated as Kensington West. They thrive in an atmosphere of carefully cultivated hot air.)

Such, on a generous estimate, would have been the extent of my accomplishments. But at the present moment I possess a music library which includes the great majority of Chopin's compositions, most of the best of Schumann's pianoforte works, many of Beethoven's sonatas, and a large assortment of other pieces, classical and modern, ranging from Bach, through Mozart, Schubert, and Weber, through Mendelssohn and Brahms, through Bizet and Saint-Säens, to Rachmaninov, Scriabine, and Debussy. I have studied, considered, practised and learned them. I have followed them up, whenever possible, in concert programmes, making mental note of varied

shades of colour and meaning imparted to them by master hands. And I am guiltless of conceit when I assert that, after fifteen years of this experience, I can produce a far more satisfactory interpretation of many of these pieces, than can the average, unskilled amateur pianist. That almost stands to reason. Music has some meaning to me; it is something more than a lot of tunes; it has developed in my mind into an intelligible language. And I have mastered the machine, and handle it as automatically and unconsciously as, after a yet longer experience, I handle a motor car. I can give to each piece of music almost my own interpretation.

Almost, but not quite. The machine has, I admit, its glaring defects. The perforations on the music-roll (a development of the principle on which the old-fashioned musical box worked) correspond exactly to the composer's directions on the score, according to the most generally accepted edition. Notes directed to be played in rhythm with one another, as in a melody and harmonic accompaniment, are always struck exactly together; and the performer can take no liberty whatsoever with them. He can make the melody stand out by muffling down the accompaniment (for which a very ingenious device is provided), but he cannot soften both down to a whisper, even though the music demands this, except at the sacrifice of all expression. Without difficulty he can spring suddenly from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo;* but the reverse operation is exceedingly difficult and seldom satisfactory. Also the music roll after prolonged use begins to play him false, and causes the piano to utter additional and discordant notes, extremely disconcerting to the conscientious interpreter. And, finally, certain

pieces are of such length that they have to be divided into sections ; and the divisions, entailing long pauses, are selected arbitrarily by the manufacturers of the rolls without the slightest regard to the musical continuity of the work ; and, even so, some of the sectional rolls are of such bulk, that in their final stages they override the flanges of the receiving spool, and, released from all guidance, wobble from side to side, so that the player has to concentrate his faculties on operating the tracking lever in conformity with the yawing paper, to the utter detriment of the music which is being played.

These drawbacks are serious ; but they are not so serious as they sound. Generally speaking, accurate obedience to the directions of the composer or his editor lends crispness and vigour to the performance of any work ; and, even when it does not, it can hardly be said to ruin the work. The tone which suggests a whisper, and is yet expressive, is the speciality of the greatest masters ; and it is seldom given to the amateur pianist to reproduce it. As to that, therefore, the machine is in no worse a case than the amateur. The sudden *diminuendo* is, as I say, difficult for the machine and its operator to compass, but not impossible ; but neither does the amateur pianist always accomplish it with ease and success. The music-roll at its worst is never guilty of such frequent false notes as the fingers of many an amateur contrive to produce. The arbitrary pause for an exchange of rolls in a divided work is less annoying than the amateurish full stop (on some impossible combination of notes) at the foot of the hill difficulty. And the game of Follow the Paper played with the tracking lever is hardly more detrimental to an artistic interpretation than the much

more familiar game of Decipher the Score played with the anxious eye.

Given an individual in charge with something of the artist in his nature, the mechanical player is, in sober fact, a far more satisfactory medium of interpretation than the keyboard unskilfully handled. Had I the requisite skill of wrist and finger ; had I learned to read music with facility ; nothing should have induced me to use a player-piano. But, rather than grope my way amateurishly through a few inconsiderable pieces, giving little gratification to myself, and none to anybody else, I welcomed this invention gladly as soon as it had been developed to a stage that offered some scope to the performer's individuality.

Apart from that primitive, detachable piano-player, which I have mentioned as ministering to my artistic conversion in my adolescent days, my experience has been entirely with the self-contained player-piano, of which I have tried, from time to time, different varieties. The particular variety which I favour is that which is known as the Angelus ; and I favour it because of its very adequate phrasing lever. The use of this lever has long ago become an automatic action with me. With its sensitive spring I can make it obey my will, as the pianist his own fingers. Without it all the other devices attached to the piano would be, as far as I am concerned, superfluous and useless. Other player-pianos are fitted with other devices for phrasing, but none, it seems to me, so sensitive and responsive as this one. And phrasing is the key to all musical interpretation.

XIX

Looking back at the time when I became wedded to the art of pedestrian piano playing, I should be inclined, on a superficial estimate, to say that I had little or no cultivated musical taste. But it would be truer to say that my very definite *penchant* for music, as an art, was at that time in an embryonic stage of development. Experience had yet to discipline my judgment. I was apt to trust too much to first impressions. I was just emerging at that time from the music-cum-tobacco period. I had few assured ideas about art in general, and was miles away from the ability to contemplate art as an indivisible whole, or to discern its intimate and necessary connection with scientific thought.

I have recently discarded some items from my original library—discarded them finally with no intention of replacing them. Chaminade's *Autumn* is one of these. It is quite the best thing that Chaminade ever wrote. But I want it no longer. It is not that it has ceased to have any meaning for me; it never had any except a sugary prettiness. But I have no more desire to play or hear it again, than to re-read *Sandford and Merton*. Mendelssohn's song without words entitled *Fleecy Clouds* is also banished: a tone poem on an oleographic sky-scrape. Discarded, too, are Grieg's *Hochzeitstag auf Troldhaugen*, and his *Berceuse* (Op. 38). These were all included in my first five-and-twenty rolls.

I regarded them at the time as good music, and played them as such, earnestly and seriously. If at that time I had thought of writing a sentimental novel, I should have made the fingers of my cultured heroine wander over the notes of Chaminade's *Autumn* or Grieg's *Berceuse* in the uncontrolled manner peculiar to heroes and heroines of fiction. At the same period I was still impressed by the false pathos of the finale of Tchaikovski's *Symphonie Pathétique,* and considered the D Major Symphony of Brahms "abstruse." As for noble and beautiful tone-poems, such as Schubert's Symphony in C Major, and Beethoven's Piano Concerto in G, I was wont to praise them because it was the proper thing to do (just as the average reader of library novels is wont to praise Hardy and Galsworthy), without feeling really attracted by them.

I have the player-piano to thank for forming my tastes rapidly and completely, as no periodical attendance at concerts could have done. I used to hire rolls in those days in order to discover what I should like to possess. As I began to master the machine, and could not only carry out the instructions indicated on the paper, but give expression to the music according to my own feeling or taste, the comparative value of one work with another began to manifest itself. Few additions were made to my early collection of Grieg; Chaminade's *Autumn* received practically no support at all. But one Schumann piece after another found its way into my cupboard; while the ranks of Chopin, limited in the first instance to the Black Note Study, and the early Nocturne in E Flat, increased and multiplied at a prodigious rate.

From the very outset I disliked the settings of

orchestral works. It used to be said by the elect, and, for all I know, it may still be their view, that the only virtue of the mechanical piano is its ability to reproduce orchestral works, and other compositions on a large scale, which no pianist could play by hand. So completely do I dissent from this opinion, that I regard this alleged virtue of the player-piano as its most pronounced and dangerous vice. It does not, and it cannot reproduce orchestral and other large concerted works. It merely reproduces their notes. It gives an entirely false rendering of them. The playing of the *cor anglais* air from *Tristan* upon the tenor trombone would afford a parallel misrepresentation.

I tried numerous rolls of orchestral music which I knew from having heard it played by the orchestra. The results vexed and disgusted me. The light instrumentation of the Eighth Symphony, the *Siegfried Idyll*, the prelude to *Lohengrin*, and passages from *Pelléas et Mélisande*, was transformed into fat and ponderous harmonies. The delicacy of such works gave place to a gross heaviness. The effect resembled that of three or four independent piano tuners all at work on the one piano, if such a thing can be conceived. To play some of the larger pieces, such as the Prelude to *Tristan*, I estimated that the pianist would require between twenty and thirty fingers.

But, in any case, none of this music was designed for the piano. It took shape in the minds of its composers, garnished with orchestral colour. By taking away the orchestral colour, you take away the very sense of the music. Consider, for example, the trio from the third movement of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony. The melody, the harmonies are

nothing in themselves. The charm of that music consists in the flinging about of the melody from one group of instruments to another, against the fussy, humorous accompaniment by the lower strings. The piano has no more power than the zither to reproduce that.

Music, moreover, by being transferred from one medium of expression to another, may easily alter its whole significance. I remember a very interesting example of this when Dr. Price at one of his organ recitals at Melbourne played the *Tristan* Prelude as an organ solo. Upon the orchestra this Prelude suggests what Wagner intended that it should suggest—the exaltation of the spirit and the senses by the passion of love, with an undercurrent indicative of fate. On the organ it became something totally different—an objective study of some un-human convulsion of nature, such as a hurricane at sea ; it represented nothing but fury. The organ, in fact, though played by a skilful hand, completely misinterpreted the music. And a somewhat similar misinterpretation is provided when Mendelssohn's *Spinning Song,* or Chopin's D Flat Prelude is played by an orchestra.

I know of no orchestral music, no concerted music on a large scale, to which the piano can do justice ; and I have tried scores of pieces, ranging from the Overture to *Die Zauberflöte* to the Flower Maiden scene from *Parsifal.* Try as you will, you can never reproduce anything resembling their orchestral colour; while, at the same time, you can never make them sound like music composed for the piano. The skilled and musicianly operator of the player-piano may sometimes delude the listener into the belief that he is playing with his fingers in one of Chopin's

Mazurkas, or the slow movement of a Beethoven Sonata ; but as soon as he begins to play orchestral music, or organ music, he gives himself away, and proclaims himself to all the world a mere pedaller and worker of levers.

And, as something like half the masterpieces of music have been written for the piano alone, or for its predecessors such as the spinet and the clavichord, what need has any pianist, fingerer or pedaller, to look beyond their ample range ? Why, in fact, garble the *Tannhäuser* Overture, and *Les Préludes*, when the *Waldstein* Sonata, and the *Faschingsschwank aus Wien* are at your beck and call, and can be played without any garbling ? Though art is long, life is short. You will have to omit some music from your repertory ; and, if you are wise, you will omit that which the piano misinterprets.

But some operators, I fear, always will proclaim themselves mere pedallers and workers of levers, whatever music is set before them. I am not speaking of the kind of person who slips a roll at random into its place, hooks it to the receiving spool, sets the forward and reverse lever at " play," and the metronome at *prestissimo ;* and then lights a cigarette, folds his arms, and treadles away gaily with as much regard for *nuances*, and such-like details, as an ocean liner at full speed would display for a shoal of herrings. No ; I am speaking of a praiseworthy musical person who sits down to the instrument, soberly determined to do his best ; and yet gives you a performance guiltless of phrasing ; or of any other form of expression—a thing perfectly formal and perfectly formless—analogous to the recitation of, say, the " Ode to the West Wind " by a schoolgirl of fourteen.

Now, this is a good analogy, though I say it who

ought not ; for such a poem as the " Ode to the West Wind," as recited by the schoolgirl of fourteen, fails to convey to the listener the thoughts which actuated Shelley when he wrote it. The significance of such self-revealing words as :

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
> What if my leaves are falling like its own?
> The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
> Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
> Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
> My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

will never be brought to light, because they will be spoken without understanding.

Take now a highly poetic work of music, Schumann's *Warum,* for example. Your rendering of this work, by whatever means accomplished, may be note-perfect ; but unless you can play it with a sense of its poetry, imparting that sense to your reading of it, the outcome will be nothing but a rather informal melody, agreeably harmonised. You must not only play it, you must interpret it. If you cannot do that, it will never mean anything to you, or to others who hear you playing it. And the mechanical player owes its bad reputation largely to the efforts of serious and worthy persons, who, with the best intentions, and even with a sense of high responsibility, play pieces like *Warum* in a completely inexpressive way ; almost as if they feared to stir the spirit of poetry into life. Assuredly such profit little by the wide liberties which the mechanical player opens to them. They make no discoveries, they cannot make any. They obtain no sense of relative values. They score no triumphs even in

their own estimation. The utmost they do is to give themselves a little refined gratification, together with the feeling that they are persons of good taste with a proper abhorrence of vulgarity.

But vulgarity is often on the verge of being poetry; good taste never is. Poetry and vulgarity both spring *ab imo pectore;* but good taste is nothing but an attitude. Verily I think there is more hope of salvation for him who plunges recklessly, with folded arms, through "any old tune," than for the earnest person who, in an indiscriminate manner, renders the works of Schumann, Gounod, Debussy and Chaminade to you—"classical music, you know. So wholesome!"—precisely as if they were Czerny's exercises.

XX

But for him whose soul is capable of reacting to the influence of "sweetness and light," the mechanical player may truly be a vessel of salvation. No, I will not express the proposition subjunctively. It is a vessel of salvation. That is a definite assertion; and I shall proceed now to qualify it.

He who would find salvation through this medium must himself direct the machine. The electrically operated player-piano will never do this for him, even though it professes to reproduce the interpretations of great pianists. (As a matter of fact it reproduces only part of their interpretations. It gives their phrasing more or less exactly, and a passable semblance of their expression; but it does not and cannot give you their individual touch. And it is in touch that the individuality of the virtuoso most clearly and intimately reveals itself.) It will not do this for him because the music is not being drawn out of silence and imagination by his own action. For the same reason the gramophone, another mechanical reproducer of sound, will never bring him salvation, quite apart from the fact that its reproduction is invariably untrue, giving the listener, at best, a garbled idea of the reality. I say that not of prejudice; for I have listened to gramophones ever since they were first produced, and I recognise

their value as preservers and reproducers of beautiful singing voices, and the art of great instrumentalists ; but I say it with confidence all the same. And from both the electrical piano and the gramophone the element of personality is missing, an element which seems to me as important in musical as in dramatic interpretation. *Vox et praeterea nihil* is as poor a substitute for the living Battistini or Chaliapine as for the living Forbes-Robertson or Moscovitch.

There is that, then. And there is something else. The mechanical piano is not salvation but damnation for a child. For unless music be taught to a child educatively, he ought never to be allowed to touch it. It is not given to children, unless they possess a precocious genius (in which case their genius ought to be taken in hand and properly cultivated), to wrest from music, or from any other kind of artistic expression, the poetry which is in it, and that which the poetry connotes. Poetry, in its true sense, is intelligible only to those who have some insight into the meaning of life ; and that is exactly what children have not. Neither, as children, can they acquire it. A musical child is a musical adult in embryo ; but strictly in embryo. He has virtuous impressions, which rightfully developed, may lead to a virtuous understanding. But those impressions, to become understanding, must be educated. The mechanical player to a child is merely a source of amusement ; the working of it a pastime. It provides neither of the two elements essential to a child's education, discipline and effort of will. The effect of it will be to retard instead of developing his musical understanding. Instead of moving through effort towards intelligence, he will remain stationary, absorbing impressions without effort. And, by letting him thus

treat the art of music as a game, you are robbing him of his chances of acquiring the mastery over it as an art, and of the great happiness which true musicianly skill brings to its possessor.

But for the grown-up person, who really feels, living and stirring within him the germs of true musicianship, but who, through some defect in his upbringing, has come to maturity without the mastery over any orm of musical expression, these instruments have a great value. For they enable that person to enter nto close communion with the art in which he desires to express himself. To express himself! Not merely to amuse himself by playing tunes, whether vulgar or refined, but to exact from music the utterance of something that rests within his own being. Here is one who is, by inherited temperament, or by virtue of some untraceable element within him, a musician; and he can play no instrument. And here is an instrument, faulty in many ways, but still in some degree obedient to the behests of its operator, which anybody can play with little effort and no special training. For such a person that instrument throws open the portals of a new world. Because he is a musician, he will master it, and it will become his servant; not an ideally obedient servant, but still subject in the main to his will. He will experiment and make discoveries. He will enter into the music he plays, and be a part of it, until it enters into him, and becomes a part of him. It will no longer be merely an object of beauty to him, like a picture seen in a public gallery, but something much more intimate—the expression of his own idea of beauty, his own cosmos. And thenceforth, when music is played to him by others, he will hear it with a new understanding, certain to develop, as time goes on, into a

clear and keen discrimination. He will have mastered an art in principle; and you cannot master an art in principle without mastering much else besides. Art is rooted in life. The mastery over art carries the victor to the threshold of high wisdom.

XXI

You are asked to imagine a gentleman (defined by our expert sociologists as a person who consumes without producing : the commodity made away with in this case being music) inhabiting, some fifteen years ago, a flat in Marylebone, and, at certain convenient hours, taking expeditions into the world of music. His first discoveries are, as I have indicated, pretty tunes. To begin with he is not acutely discriminating, but practice gradually sharpens his senses. Presently there takes shape in his mind a certain scale of prettiness in tunes. A particular sort of pretty prettiness is found to wear badly, to become thin and transparent, to exhaust itself. Another sort of prettiness, at the first hearing less pretty, apparently, than the other, moves in the opposite way, grows more and more pretty, until it becomes a thing of manifest beauty. So by degrees the Chaminades, the Greigs, the Raffs, the Sindings, the Gounods, the Rubinsteins, sink into silence ; and the Beethovens, the Schuberts, the Schumanns, and the Chopins enter into their heritage.

It is their heritage, you must understand. The term is not loosely employed, as a mere literary decoration. You who to-day read Dostoievski and Anatole France with avidity, did not others pave the way for you to the enjoyment of those intellectual riches ? Do you not owe the understanding, which makes it possible for you thus to regale yourself, to

sages of somewhat slighter calibre? Had you not first appreciated Stevenson, Kipling, Jack London, and Hilaire Belloc—to pick out a few names at random—could you ever have attained to delight in the higher things? And even for Stevenson, Kipling and company, was not some preparation necessary? You have exhausted the possibilities of the smaller and the greater have stepped into their shoes. With music the case is exactly the same. You must pass through the Sinding, Gounod, and Rubinstein stage, before you can enter freely upon the Beethoven, Schumann, and Chopin stage.

It will be objected at once that truly musical people recognise the superiority of Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin *et hoc genus omne* instinctively, at the very outset of their career. To which I answer that, unless they are gifted at that outset with a remarkably precocious genius, they just don't. They may say they do. They may behave as if they do. They may even believe they do. But in reality they don't. The preferences of the neophyte are essentially superficial taking shape as they do in impressions; and the neophyte can no more understand Chopin than he can understand Swinburne. He can like Chopin; if he has any music in his soul he is bound to like Chopin; but that is another matter altogether. I liked Chopin's *Marche Funèbre* when I was a boy at school; but that is a far cry from understanding, appreciating, catching the elemental poetry of the Prelude in F minor.

What really happens to the neophyte is that he enjoys Chopin's music, or some of it, but without comprehension. In all probability he pretends to enjoy it with comprehension; but it is not difficult for the wise to unmask that pretence. Now, if it

were not for his pose, which causes him to adopt and cherish the prejudices of others, he would like Sinding, Gounod, and Rubinstein very much; and, furthermore, he would understand them perfectly. It would be exceedingly good for him if he did, for they would level the track for him towards a much finer and fuller appreciation of the masters; and he would run no risk (as he does in the other circumstance), of finding himself, or, rather, being found by others, permanently stuck in a quagmire of priggish misconceptions.

If I had hearkened to those oracles who warned me to shun mere prettiness, and cling from the very start to the higher musical virtues, I should never have achieved any musical virtue at all. As it was, I groped my way, step by step, from one level of intelligence to another, until I discovered the manifold joys of appreciation. In short, instead of assuming that I was educated already, I set to work to educate myself.

I have mentioned the F Minor Prelude of Chopin. In those early days I tried over all the twenty-four Preludes, and those which I rejected most promptly were the Preludes in A minor, F minor and D minor. I regard them to-day as three of the most beautiful and wonderful pieces of music ever written for the piano. So confident do I feel in the rightness of that judgment, that I would deny understanding of Chopin to anyone who thought otherwise; and I would say that, unless, and until you can appreciate those three Preludes, you cannot truly appreciate the other characteristic compositions of Chopin.

Wagner contemptuously referred to Chopin as "the ladies' Chopin," implying thereby that Chopin, as a musician, was too trivial a person altogether to exact the esteem of a masculine, Olympian Wagner.

Dare we whisper that the tremendous *Meister* was talking, as they say in Oxford and Bermondsey, through his hat,—that he was passing condemnation upon Chopin without having studied his works with any intimacy? It is to be feared that this is so, and that his judgment upon Chopin was no more rational than the anti-Wagnerian diatribes of Sterndale-Bennett. Not once, I believe, is Chopin mentioned in Wagner's reminiscences. And yet, of all Wagner's contemporaries, Chopin was by far the greatest. Schumann's "Hats off, gentlemen, a genius!" showed a sounder judgment altogether.

I have mentioned that there are some who would rank Chopin among the giants. After due consideration, and in spite of the amazement with which his genius fills me, I cannot do this; his powers expressed themselves within too limited a range. Although his place in music is far higher than that of Robert Louis Stevenson in literature, there is an obvious and tragic basis of comparison between them. Both, one feels, might have achieved far greater things than they did, had not a terrible disease sapped their strength to its foundations. Each had to work within a small compass, because physical disablement robbed him of the vigour to go outside it. There the comparison ends; for the spontaneous poetry of Chopin's works reminds us more of Keats and Shelley than of poor Robert Louis with his hundred and one disfiguring affectations. You cannot help noticing, however, that whenever Chopin attempts to go outside the range of music for the instrument, of which he was so perfect a master, he is like one lost in the byways of an unfamiliar city. And, in considering him, whether by himself, or in relation to other composers, you must ignore all those works of his

which were not written for the solo pianoforte. They are no more characteristic of Chopin than set pieces, such as the Battle Symphony, and the *Huldigungsmarsch* are characteristic of Beethoven and Wagner.

In the twenty-four Preludes (Op. 28), you have the whole of Chopin epitomised. He reveals there his every mood, and he reveals it to perfection. They are the perfect miniature works of music in any form, never equalled or surpassed before or since. Each one—and some of them conclude almost in a breath—is a gem of tone-poetry, complete and sufficient in itself. Played as one work, they are a picture, not, as in the case of Schumann's suites, of a detached poetic idea, but of life itself. The labels which admirers of Chopin have attached to them ("dripping water," "Cinderella," etc.), are misleading. The quality of thought which each expresses is not to be designated by a word; for no music less superficial than these Preludes has ever been created. Chopin was not a man of letters; he has left us no key to the ideas that possessed him: but surely they were deeper and more searching than Schumann's in the same proportion as Schumann's were deeper and more searching than Mendelssohn's.

What are the other great masterpieces of Chopin? That *tour de force*, the G Minor Ballade, occurs to me at once, beautiful, passionate, poetical; the glittering C Sharp Minor Scherzo, a work akin to the Prelude to the third act of *Lohengrin;* its sister work in B Flat Minor, with its revolutionary, stressful trio; the A Flat Ballade, which evokes the spirit of ancient religious rites, the forest shrine, the sacred dance; the magnificent C Minor and F Sharp Minor Nocturnes; the brilliant studies; the delicate

Andante Spianato, breathing the spirit of Milton's "Il Penseroso" (but not the E Flat Polonaise to which it serves as an introduction); the Mazurkas in B Major (Op. 56, No. 1), and F Sharp Minor (Op. 59, No. 3); the noble A Flat Polonaise (too often murdered by unintelligent technicians. Dignity is its essence, not noise); the C Sharp Minor Valse. All these are masterpieces; but they are far from completing the list. It would be almost true to say that in the catalogue of Chopin's compositions the masterpieces predominate.

And if he had had robust health, and had lived to mature years, what organ music he might have written! His masterly employment of the chromatic scale, his tremendous arpeggios! Those great Études of Opus 25 in B minor and C minor, are they not suggestive of organ music on a grand scale? I have often felt that Chopin's early death robbed the world of a second Bach.

He had his uninspired moments. What composer had not? He gave us, for example, the *Polonaise Fantaisie*, and the sickly Nocturne in E Flat (Op. 55, No. 2; not the early one). They reflect possibly the inroads of the disease which ultimately laid him low at an age when Beethoven and Wagner had hardly attained to the fulness of their powers. A certain type of rigid musical scholiast will dangle such works as these before the gaze of the uninitiated as characteristic of their composer, labelling them meretricious, spiritless, morbid, and so forth; thus implying that the Ballades, the Scherzos, and the Preludes are also meretricious, spiritless and morbid. They have said such things to me, demonstrating very clearly what I have always suspected; that your rigid musical scholiast is, at bottom, a very dishonest

sort of person, who will not hesitate to propound a palpable fallacy in support of his scholastic prejudices. And it has become a convention, planted by such gardeners as these in the fertile soil of public ignorance, to say that Chopin's art is essentially feminine. Whereas it is essentially, and even obviously not feminine, as any one acquainted with the habits of the essentially feminine mind can hardly help recognising. Chopin's art is no more feminine than that of Turner and Swinburne. The music of Brahms is really much more feminine than that of Chopin. A large part of Brahms' music might well have been composed by an exceptionally poetic *hausfrau*.

I may add that the works of no composer are so scandalously misrepresented in performance as those of Chopin. Among the major pianists not half-a-dozen display, in their rendering of his works, the smallest insight into their poetry. They are hammered out as if they had sprung from the volcanic genius of Liszt (in his Hungarian Rhapsody mood), or tinkled through as if they were the insipidities of Raff. To play Chopin, as Chopin ought to be played, you must first absorb his poetry ; the technical side of his genius will manifest itself to you in due season. It is undoubtedly from too much concentration upon that side, that the widespread misinterpretation of his works chiefly arises. Poesy should never be regarded as more than the handmaiden to poetry. That is a truism applicable to all artistic interpretation.

XXII

Schumann had a greater range than Chopin, but a lesser intensity. His works have greater variety but smaller significance. His was a more ingenuous and child-like spirit, and he could often be, what Chopin seldom if ever was—sentimental. His music is also more decorative than Chopin's, but less brilliant. Seldom does Schumann startle us, but great is his power to soothe and console. He was a charming, witty and vivacious man, erudite and cultivated, and very consciously an artist. He was also "queer." His mind was peculiarly open to bizarre and fantastic ideas. He ended his life in a lunatic asylum.

It is possible that all these traits in Schumann's character can be detected in his music. Many critics have detected them there. But, if they had not known all about Schumann first, would they have detected them? In other words, can anybody deduce the accidents of the man's character from hearing, or even studying his compositions? I confess I am more than doubtful of it. Music is a reflection of thoughts which arise in its creators. But the thoughts which arise in men are shaped, not only by their characters, but by numerous accidental influences operating from outside. The expression of them reveals the moods in which they took birth; but it does not necessarily reveal the permanent elements of character. It is true of all forms of art alike, that

only in the works of the greatest masters, and then only in their greatest works, are the elements of character revealed. And perhaps they are few to whom that revelation is vouchsafed. Schumann was not one of the greatest masters; and his work, like most poetic creations in tone, words, or colour, reveals the artist rather than the man.

He was not one of the greatest masters; but he was a master for all that. He had genius, and the finest craftsmanship. The thoughts that arose in him took shape in a lyric beauty seldom surpassed. An evening of Schumann's music is like a day in one of the famous Italian picture galleries. There is in his music the soft, warm tone-colour of the old masters, with here and there a Titian touch of something stronger and more emphatic. It possesses a quality not found in the same degree in the work of any other composer, the quality of refinement; and refinement, when it is a quality and not a posture, has a value which cannot be gainsaid. Schumann is one of the few composers of whom it can be truly said that he never pandered to tastes which were lower than his own.

Now, the very best of Schumann is to be found, not in his pianoforte music, but in his songs. As a composer of songs he has, in my estimation (which has the virtue of being amply supported), no superior. I consider him equal there to Schubert, superior to Hugo Wolf and Brahms, superior even to Purcell. When I think of the perfect ballad my mind goes instantly to such songs as *Ich grolle nicht* and *Der Nussbaum*. Yet many rich and rare things are to be found in the piano works. For example, those gems known as the *Fantasiestücke*, which include *Aufschwung*, *Warum*, and *In der Nacht*; the Novel-

lettes, particularly the second one in D Major; the gay *Carnaval*, to which the Russian dancers have imparted a new and delightful meaning; the *Kinderscenen*, little sketches of a child's innocence and wonder. As you come to know such works as these, you feel a kind of affection for Schumann, a personal affection, which no other composer can inspire in like manner. I have often thought that, if I had the choice of knowing one from among all the great composers, here or hereafter, Schumann is the name I would choose.

His great Piano Concerto is by far the best of his works on a large scale. It is the most directly beautiful of all works in this form; and it is one of the greatest of them. But the player-piano reduces it to wreckage, converting it into a vast jumble of notes. Its beauty notwithstanding, it had better be left alone by the pedestrian pianist.

Beethoven presents something in the nature of a problem to the collector of music-rolls. His pianoforte works are vast in extent, and loaded with musical riches. Some of the most sublime and beautiful music ever written for any instrument, or group of instruments, is to be found among them, as well as some of the most brilliant music in a technical sense. All, with very few exceptions, are written in the classical sonata form, a fact which gives them a singular uniformity, and facilitates the task of comparison and selection. But their high level of excellence renders difficult the task of rejection. It is here that the problem arises. Had I space to hold them in my cupboards I would solve it by keeping the whole collection; but as the whole collection in the form of music-rolls would occupy as much room as the printed scores of all the pianoforte works ever written,

that solution is denied to me, and, I imagine, to almost every other pedestrian pianist. I have to content myself with a selection, none too representative ; adding to it only now and then.

It is customary to divide the career of Beethoven into three periods, each representing a given stage of his development. Now, about this I have a word to say, not to the wise, but to those who may be prone to take the wisdom of the wise too much for granted. There exists a good deal of misconception about these three periods in Beethoven's career. They are not, like the periods in Wagner's career, so plainly and strongly marked that any tyro can recognise them. It would, indeed, be very nearly accurate to say that Beethoven's development was steady and uninterrupted, and marked by no sudden jumps at all. There is a remarkable contrast, of course, between such a work as the Sonata in G Major (Op. 14, No. 2) and the Sonata in B Flat (Op. 106) ; a contrast so remarkable, that, if they were played in succession, and no indication were given of their authorship and date, anyone hearing them for the first time might easily take them to be the works of two different composers, living in two different epochs. Yet if the same person studied the whole of the sonatas, one after another, still without knowing who had written them, he could hardly fail to perceive that they were all the work of the same hand. It is worth observing, also, that the contrast between that Sonata in G, and the *Moonlight* Sonata in C Sharp Minor (Op. 27, No. 2), both of which belong nominally to the early period, is very much greater than the contrast between the latter and the Sonata in F Minor (Op. 57), entitled *Appassionata*, though this belongs to the middle period.

I see perfectly clearly that Beethoven's music *can* be divided roughly into three periods ; but *why* it should be so divided is not quite so obvious to me. I cannot perceive that the division is of any assistance to the interpreter ; and its usefulness to the student of music seems to me very questionable. For myself I prefer, as I say, to regard Beethoven's works as showing a smooth and steady progression from a brilliant immaturity to the fullest maturity attained by any maker of music. And him who desires to compass the adequate interpretation of Beethoven I would recommend to begin by studying the more mature compositions. It is usual, for pianists at any rate, to commence the study of Beethoven with the early works. Many of these are, of course, very beautilul, and rank among the most attractive of all compositions for the piano ; but most of them are strongly coloured with the influence of Haydn and Mozart, and have to be interpreted in a very classical and lyrical manner. The consequence is that numerous pianists interpret all Beethoven's pianoforte works in that manner ; and this amounts, in the works of his full maturity, to misinterpretation. Such true Beethoven as the Sonata *Appassionata* calls for a manner of rendering quite distinct from that which the Mozartian Sonata *Pathétique* demands. Therefore, as I say, my advice to him who wishes to do justice to Beethoven's music, is that he should begin with the works of the middle and later years of Beethoven's career. For the operator of the mechanical piano this arrangement is just as easy as the other, since the later Beethoven presents no more difficulty to him than the earlier.

Beyond considering that point, he may safely ignore the periods of Beethoven's career. They are

quite arbitrary divisions, and ought so to be viewed by those who wish to understand and appreciate their Beethoven. A truer understanding will be gained by those who fix their attention upon his relation to his predecessors and his successors, and so learn to gauge his significance in the history of music. From *Semele* to *Siegfried* seems a far cry; but their relationship becomes as clear as daylight when you interpose the Seventh Symphony in the space between them. That purpose would not be served by such a contemporary work as Cherubini's *Wasserträger*.

The number of Beethoven's piano compositions makes it almost impossible to discuss them in detail. Perhaps the most perfect of all of them is the *Waldstein* Sonata in C Major (Op. 53), which, to my mind, possesses a classic beauty almost unmatched in music. But it has many serious rivals for the premier place. There is, for example, that lovely and poetic work the Sonata in D Minor (Op. 31, No. 2); and there are those three last pianoforte sonatas in E, A Flat, and C Minor, which contain so inexhaustible a fund of musical wealth that to study them is an education in itself. The early works, too, when you come to practise them, will bring you ample reward. I may mention the much neglected Sonata in C Minor (Op. 10, No. 1) as a giver of much satisfaction to anyone who seeks poetic beauty in music; and there is, of course, the well-known A Flat Sonata (Op. 26) with its delightful variations, and its characteristic *Marche Funèbre*.

Of the other side of Beethoven's genius, his mastery over the art of composition, his treatment of thematic material, I say nothing, except that this constitutes the basis upon which rest the beauty and majesty

of his works. His talent perfects his genius. But, until you have comprehended the genius of the poet, it is useless to realise the talent of the musical architect. That which I have said of Chopin, and the interpretation of his works, applies with equal force to Beethoven, and the interpretation of his. Until you can feel the poetry of those works, you can never interpret them. The true way to the technical understanding of them lies through æsthetic appreciation. The concert-goer has to endure far too much academic playing of Beethoven.

The pianoforte pieces give us the whole of Beethoven's career, but by no means the whole of Beethoven's works. The violin sonatas are hardly less significant; and one of them, the *Kreutzer*, stands almost unequalled in glowing and passionate beauty. And there are such works as the Septet in E Flat (Op. 20), the Sextet in E Flat (Op. 81B, but an early work) with its lovely slow movement, the three Quartets (Op. 59); and, indeed, many other examples of chamber music seldom equalled, and never surpassed, before or since. And, crowning all, the monumental orchestral works; the nine symphonies, the *Coriolan*, *Egmont* and *Leonora* Overtures, the violin and piano concertos. But none of these would I recommend to the player-piano operator, save in his capacity as a concert-goer. To none of them will the player-piano ever do justice. The pianoforte works, and these alone, should be his care.

XXIII

I HAVE said that, if my life depended on it, I would name Bach as the greatest of all composers. Yet out of the enormous library of masterpieces which Bach bequeathed to posterity, only two examples figure in my shelves. So, it seems that I confess myself a hypocrite ; that I pay lip-service to this old master, whose works, when it comes to the practical test, fail to arouse my interest. I wish I could give my moralist a pleasant run for his money ; but, truth to tell, it cannot be managed. My reason for setting Bach aside in practice is a very practical one. Strictly speaking, Bach composed no pianoforte music at all. He wrote, however, a great deal of music, including the forty-eight Preludes and Fugues, for the clavichord, the sweetest and most expressive of all the precursors of the pianoforte. Mozart and Beethoven loved the clavichord, as well they might ; and it was, undoubtedly, a far more beautiful instrument than the thin-toned piano of a hundred years ago. Bach's clavichord music can all be transferred, with little loss of quality, to the modern piano. It would be supposed, therefore, that the effect of mechanical operation upon its rendering would not differ from that effect in the case of other music. But there is a very great difference.

It is the forty-eight Preludes and Fugues that one particularly desires to render upon the piano. Now, nobody can give an effective rendering of fugal

counterpoint, who cannot play the blended themes so that each stands out distinctly from the others, and is so decipherable by the listener. Each individual theme must *speak*, though two or three may be rendered simultaneously. Failing this, the work ceases to be a fugue, and becomes merely a succession of melodies, chiefly on the higher notes, with a contrapuntal accompaniment ; a *vers libre* edition of the canon. It is true that many inexpert players of Bach do so interpret his fugues : full many a time have I been witness to the fact. But I see no reason why I, knowing better, should imitate their errors. The player-piano cannot make those individual themes " speak out loud and bold " ; neither can I conceive of any device which could make it do so. Rather than misinterpret those fugues, I put them aside, and will not have them.

Of all Bach's delightful Sarabandes, Gigues, Bourrées and Gavottes, to which the player-piano might do justice, very few are published in the form of music-rolls. This bears eloquent testimony to the taste of the cultured public. Practically everything Chaminade ever wrote is at your beck and call. Raff, Waldteufel, and Offenbach are to be had in plenty. But the most perfect *light* music ever written is almost unobtainable. One Bourrée and Liszt's piano arrangement of the Organ Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor—such is the extent of my Bach library. I suggest to those who publish rolls of music that they should consider the dance music of J. S. Bach, and issue it in perforated rolls ; and, by the insinuating arts of the salesman, bring it within the ken of those, their serious-minded customers, who habitually ask for the works of Dvořák, Grieg and Tchaikovski.

And they might do the same for certain works by

Couperin, Domenico Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Tartini, and other old masters of music.

That quiet satisfaction, unassociated with any sort of excitement, which the minor works of Bach afford to him who studies them, is granted in an equal degree by Mozart's pianoforte pieces; and to these the player-piano can do reasonable justice. Though they are "pure," as opposed to "language" music, their essence, none the less is poetry. Anyone addicted to transcendental forms of expression might call it poetry too divine for words. The Fantasia in C Minor is one of the masterpieces of music in any form; and the Adagio movement of the attached Sonata (No. 18) equals in beauty any of the slow movements of Beethoven. The Rondo in A Minor, too, will bring ample reward to him who studies it.

Schubert is not so satisfactory. In his pianoforte works he is not found at his best, which is to be discovered among his almost countless songs, in the magnificent Octet, and in the yet more magnificent Symphony in C Major. Still the eight Impromptus are not without virtue, and the *Moments Musicaux* have charm. Schubert can hardly help finding his way into your library.

As with Schubert, so with Brahms, who as a composer of pianoforte works is respectable rather than radiant. The Brahms who elicits our admiration (which increases with familiarity) is the Brahms of the German Requiem, the Clarinet Quintet, the four Symphonies, the choral rhapsody on Goethe's *Harzreise*, the romantic Violin Concerto, and a group of vocal ballads inferior only to those of Schubert and Schumann. The pianoforte pieces, though typical of their composer, are slight things in comparison with these. The best of them are the two series of

variations on themes by Handel and Paganini. To these may be added a few of the later works—the G Minor Rhapsody (Op. 79), for example—and those charming Hungarian Dances, which are so excellent an example of the truly musicianly treatment of folk melodies.

There is a new vogue of Mendelssohn; so that I need not apologise for mentioning his name in the same breath with those of Schubert and Brahms. Mendelssohn was thoroughly at home with the pianoforte, at which he excelled as a virtuoso player; and all his works designed for it are completely pianistic, and calculated, in sympathetic hands, to reveal the virtues which that instrument possesses. His original melodies are often beautiful, expressive and charming, though his treatment of them is sometimes formal to the point of banality. Thus has arisen the convention of Mendelssohn's conventionality. But to speak of Mendelssohn's conventionality is hardly accurate. Mendelssohn implanted a formal and symmetrical habit of musical expression, which by its very nature appealed to pedantic and unoriginal spirits, and so developed, under their hands, into a tiresome and inartistic convention; and this, in its turn, reflected back upon Mendelssohn's music generally, and caused numerous artists to interpret it in a lifeless, inartistic way, not merely without understanding, but without any effort to understand. In the hands of Paderewski or Sauer the works of Mendelssohn are made to appear in their true colours. But these masters are careful, of course, in making their selection. They do not inflict such banalties upon us as *Confidence*, *Consolation*, and *Fleecy Clouds*. They choose those gay and lightsome works of his brilliant and precocious youth: spontaneous

expressions of pure joy, such as the Caprice in E Minor, and the *Rondo Capriccioso*, which carry the fancies of the listener into a bright, fantastic world—the world of Grimm and Hans Andersen; or else the Caprice in A Minor; or the exquisite *Variations Sérieuses*. Or, should they turn to the *Lieder ohne Worte*, their choice will rest upon the *Spinnelied*, or the Hunting Songs, or the Presto in C Major (No. 45), or a round dozen more, which are charming and spontaneous works of poetry.

The true musician will discover many things of delight among those little poems. Even the piece called *Espoir*, so familiar as an organ voluntary in country churches, grows upon you, and is not rendered stale by time. We can all do with *that* Mendelssohn. The Mendelssohn we cannot do with is the surprisingly uninspired creator of the Wedding March, which in these enlightened days ought perhaps to be re-named "The Temporary Wedding March," or "The March of the Pilgrims to the Divorce Court." The latter title, done into German, would look quite impressive on a concert programme.

Mendelssohn, at any rate, is, to my mind, an essential part of the pedestrian pianist's music library. There come times when you need the kind of music that he wrote; just as the consistent opera-goer can do with a little of Rossini or Verdi, after a prolonged bout of Wagner and Strauss, or the appreciative playgoer with a whiff or two of Dumas *fils* after a period of Brieux. For life is made up of many elements, and our moods are but a reflection of life. Sublime things contemplated, or more intimately received, exalt our spirits; but too much sublimity is unnatural, and bad for our health. In over-doses it makes us, not sublime, but cranky and

freakish. Well, Mendelssohn is a good antidote to any tendency of that sort. That is why his works achieved such immense popularity in the middle years of the last century. They addressed themselves with refreshing normality and candour to a world poisoned with the hectic breath of Byronism.

Then there is Liszt. I am far from regarding Liszt as one of the greatest masters. His work as a whole is shallow and pretentious. It is full of large, obvious effects. He is a kind of musical Doré. We are supposed to owe to him the Symphonic Poem. As a matter of fact we owe to him merely the label. Beethoven's C Minor Symphony is a symphonic poem, and a far greater one than *Les Préludes* or *Der Ideale ;* and the same may be said of Schubert's Symphony in C Major. Still *Les Préludes*, considered simply as music, has a considerable amount of beauty and power, and can be taken as representing Liszt in one of his most inspired moments. And some of his songs are very noble examples of that class of composition.

But of course it is upon his pianoforte works that the fame of Liszt chiefly rests ; and these will live, not because they are, as music, inherently excellent, but because they provide the virtuoso performer with unparalleled opportunities for displaying the brilliance of his technique. Most of them are prodigiously difficult, and demand so unique a skill in fingering, as to place them quite outside the reach of even the most talented amateurs. For this very reason few of them are at all suitable for the player-piano, which cannot reproduce any semblance of the virtuoso's delicacy of touch. The *Études d'exécution transcendante*, transferred to the machine, no longer give you transcendent execution, or anything like

it, but merely a noisy and meaningless rush of notes up and down the scales. The Hungarian Rhapsodies, however, based as they are upon broad, and usually striking melodies, give results far more satisfactory; and, speaking for myself, I prefer them on the whole as works of music. The Twelfth Rhapsody, indeed, is a poem bearing some affinity to Chopin's Ballades; and if only the melodies, as well as their treatment, had taken birth in Liszt's brain, it would have been almost sufficient to put him among the greatest masters.

When I come to Debussy and Scriabine I find myself entering a region of new considerations. They bring me face to face with what is called the new tonality. They deserve, therefore, special and separate treatment.

XXIV

This new tonality is not a break-away from the old, but simply a development of it. You can trace its origin back to Haydn, and perhaps even farther. Like every successive development which took place before it, it breaks many prematurely drafted and ratified rules. Like all previous departures from rule, it lends itself to much abuse on the part of its advocates and exponents (which does not matter, because bad art will never live); and it is disliked by people of settled tastes because it is new. And that is all there is to it.

Some years ago that very distinguished musician, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, thought to slay this new monster at a blow with the steel of musical satire. And so, to the exceedingly amusing words of Mr. C. L. Graves, he proceeded to compose a terrific study in strepitous cacophony for chorus and orchestra. It was the music of Strauss, I rather fancy, that he intended to parody. Here and there he did produce a noise which reminded one a little of parts of *Feuersnot* and the *Sinfonia Domestica;* but, in the main, it was nothing but a violent explosion of Stanford's own antipathies. Stravinski, I take it, was at work on *L'Oiseau de Feu* at about that time; Debussy had produced *Pelléas et Mélisande* two or three years before; Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole* must have been just published; and the first performance of Delius's *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*

had either just taken place, or was about to be given. Stanford's outburst had about the same relation to true wisdom and understanding, as Addison's famous remark about novels and pastry-cooks, spoken at a time when ideas were surging in the minds of Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, to take shape presently in masterpieces of English literature far beyond the scope of an Addison. If ever a bolt missed its mark, it was Stanford's *Ode to Discord*. The cacophony was not even amusing. Those who, like myself, had held Stanford in high appreciation as teacher and composer regretted that he should have thus misled himself. To rail against new tendencies in art is always dangerous.

At that time the small fry had not begun to use the new tonality. They were Wagnerites, almost to a man, and were plagiarising *Tristan* and *Siegfried* with great earnestness. If Stanford's shafts were not directed against Strauss alone, then their objective consisted of people like Stravinski, Debussy, Ravel and Delius, who have employed the new tonality to express themselves with great beauty, dignity and power. In effect the accusation was one of charlatanry. If it covered Strauss alone, it was not completely irrational; for Strauss in his music has pretended at times to be a great deal more profound than he really is. But, even so, Strauss's so-called cacophony, and his affected depth of meaning have no very obvious relationship to one another. If it covered all composers who were developing their musical ideas upon principles at which not only Berlioz, Chopin, Schumann and Wagner, but Moussorgski and even Brahms had hinted very broadly; with which Grieg and Taneyev had made experiments; and of which suggestions were to be found in the

works of Haydn and Beethoven; then it was pure pedantry, and nothing else, and akin to the outbursts of Hanslick and Davison against Wagner.

Strictly speaking, no musical idea can be cacophonic. If you consider music as a species of poetry, cacophony cannot exist in it; for, as soon as there is cacophony, it ceases to be poetry, and so ceases to be music. If you want to find real cacophony, study the dreary harmonies of some of our evangelical hymn tunes. There you have ugliness, naked and unashamed.

I speak here as an amateur. The value of a musical cadence or an harmonic progression does not depend, for me, upon its obedience to certain laws, but upon the measure of its power to gratify my senses. The old laws of harmony and counterpoint I approve in so far as they serve that end; but equally I commend any transgression of them that fulfils the same purpose. And it seems to me absurd to make a convention of observing or defying those laws. The true artist is he who moves instinctively towards beauty of expression, and is a law unto himself in compassing its achievement; and it is only to the earlier stages of artistic education that the fixed laws of art are applicable with any force.

The question we have to put to ourselves is this: are works such as *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *L'Oiseau de Feu*, the *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, and *Promethée* poems, or are they not? If they are poems, they are *ipso facto* euphonic. That is the practical way of looking at the matter, as opposed to the academic way. Did not Bernard Shaw once remark that the golden rule in art is that there is no golden rule?

Here, then, we have a question of taste. A taste is a preference. How do you arrive at your prefer-

ence? If it is based upon a first impression it is not worth much. I speak there from experience. I had once an impression which elevated Tchaikovski above César Franck. I had another which elevated Pinero above Bernard Shaw. Experience has proved to me the falsity of those impressions. They were misconceptions which I wedded in haste, and of which I repented at leisure. If you have nothing more than an impression that this modern music is, generally speaking, either cacophonic or euphonic, you are not justified in expressing an opinion on the subject. You will express an opinion of course. You will repeatedly express an opinion. In jubilation, in anger, with laughter and with tears you will express it. But you will not be justified in doing so.

But suppose you have studied the new tonality, what then? Suppose you have so familiarised yourself with it, that you can set it side by side with all that has gone before, or any part thereof, without being conscious of any extraordinary contrast? Suppose as you play Debussy over to yourself you discover that he is Grieg over again, but in an exalted, transformed, and glorified shape; and find in the music of Scriabine something of Beethoven, Chopin, and Wagner on the one hand, and of Tchaikovski, Taneyev and Grechaninov on the other? Is it possible to make such discoveries as these? It is, because I have made them. This is not to say that they are based upon fact; for I am not immune against illusions. But there they are, at any rate.

I am an advocate, then, of the new tonality? Not a bit of it. I care nothing about any tonality. I am an advocate of beautiful and poetic music; and such the music of Debussy and Scriabine seems to me. Debussy's music I know well; and the better I know

it, the better I like it. With that of Scriabine I am less intimately acquainted. He gives me the impression of being a greater composer than Debussy: as far above Debussy, perhaps, as Wagner was above Weber. I want to study his music very closely; and I am wondering who next of the writers of musical trifles must make his exit from my inadequate cupboard to leave room for a plentiful supply of Scriabine. Truly, to be a pedestrian pianist with ultimate satisfaction to oneself, a palace for a habitation is required. Where else will room be found for the vast and cavernous cupboards needed to receive the coveted but bulky masterpieces in their separate cardboard boxes?

XXV

THERE is necessarily much uncertainty concerning modern musicians and their works. Posterity is the final, and the sure judge of all art-work; and contemporary opinion is never reliable. Did not the literary critics of a not very remote period heap praises upon the novels of one, William Black? Did not English culture once extol the name of a certain Martin Tupper? That sagacious Irishman, Justin McCarthy, when he summed up the literature of the mid-Victorian era, paid far less attention to Meredith than to Trollope. Schubert and César Franck never received due recognition in their lifetime; Spohr was esteemed above Schubert, Saint-Saëns above César Franck. The catalogue of errors is endless. Have we any right to suppose that it has ended at the present day?

Take two living composers, Delius and Holst. We imagine that they and their works will be known to posterity. The music of Holst differs widely, in form and colour alike, from that of Delius. The admirers of one are not always admirers of the other; and I have no doubt a census would show that Holst has far more admirers than Delius. But how will they stand with posterity? The musical world of 1840 admired Mendelssohn far more than it admired Chopin. To-day Chopin holds the field, *nemine dissentiente*. Well, my prophetic eye discerns the ultimate triumph of Delius. But I may be as

mistaken in my judgment as Justin McCarthy undoubtedly was in his. We can gauge the value of contemporary work correctly, only when its form is perfectly conventional according to the standards to which we have been accustomed.

This, being interpreted, means that I am not going to plunge rashly into a comparative estimate of the importance of living or recent composers. I had it in my mind to account for the apparent lapse of Stravinski from the ways of grace to those of the pit. It had occurred to me that this was no matter for surprise, since, after all, his grace, even at its most gracious, was not the grace of his compatriot, Scriabine, but stood in relation thereto, as the virtues of Liszt to those of Wagner. I may add that this is what I think about it. But I do not deliver my opinion *ex cathedra*. At the most I put it before you as a suggestion—something, as our cultivated publicists would say, to intrigue your minds.

There is one point, however, which cannot be too strongly emphasised. The so-called modern tonality is neither virtuous nor vicious in comparison with anything that has preceded it. Its effect is neither to consign the art of music to the rubbish-heap, nor to elevate it to the seventh heaven. It implies neither decay nor regeneration. It is a development, consistent with all former developments ; and that is all. It is, therefore, preposterous to condemn all who use it as their medium, and equally preposterous to hail them all as musical Messiahs. They are as their precursors, some great, some insignificant, the majority on the higher or lower stages of mediocrity. This is true equally of those who use it as the basis of their art, and those who merely superimpose it on more conventional forms.

It is very plain, however, that at the present day greatness is being thrust by the arts of modern publicity upon many musicians, who were not born great, and certainly have not achieved greatness. A number of musical Robert Montgomerys are being puffed with tremendous vigour, to their own utter undoing, and to the detriment of their betters. Those who find it hard in any case to get rid of their preconceptions, and to shake off their prejudice against the unfamiliar, are apt, not without reason, to shut the door on persuasion with a final bang, when the efforts of palpable incompetents are not only given a hearing (which is fair enough), but are introduced to the musical public with glowing panegyrics. The scorn, so rightly directed against such stuff and its authors, is apt to be indiscriminate in its effect, smiting the righteous as well as the unworthy ; while those who think that, through all this self-advertising effrontery, they can discern the modest features of virtue, often hesitate to proclaim the glad news, for fear of lending a hand to the encouragement of quackery. The frenzied Wagnerites of the " yellow nineties " left us a bad legacy. Before their time, each work of music stood or fell on its merits, in so far as critics and public were capable of discerning them. But now, in a particularly repulsive sort of language, based upon certain English translations of Wagner's dramatic poetry, almost every new work is bedizened for our delectation ; and it is asked of us that we shall admire what we have not even heard. Indeed we are scolded if we fail to admire on those terms. A great deal of the prejudice against modern music can be traced to the pernicious rubbish that is talked about it.

Concerning latter-day instrumentation of orchestral

and other works I have very little to say. Here again I can perceive no startling changes, but merely a normal development. We have revolted, and revolted rightly, against the garish brassiness of Tchaikovski; but it is well to remember that the "1812" Overture was quite a startling thing in its day. Orchestration of the Wagnerian pattern remains the rule rather than the exception; and some of the exceptions bear a family resemblance to Weber.

Inevitably there are experiments. Stravinski, for example, has been experimenting boldly; others with more subtlety. But, happily, that *corpus vile*, the saxophone, has not been introduced for experimental purposes. In concertos for solo-instruments and orchestra, brass and percussion after the manner of Tchaikovski are still used too freely; but the traditional concerto form is rapidly giving place to the orchestral fantasia, in which the rôles of soloist and accompanying orchestra are almost reversed. One sees there the possibility of interesting developments; though, to some extent, this is a reversion to the older kind of concerto of the days of Bach and Handel.

I was privileged to listen not long ago to a work of the *Concerto Grosso* description composed by that interesting English musician, Mr. Arthur Bliss. This piece was scored for wind instruments, piano, percussion, and tenor voice: the vocalist singing nonsense words, and figuring, not as the soloist, but simply as one of the concerted instruments. So far as the tenor voice was concerned, the effect was not unfamiliar. It sounded very much like King Herod's music in *Salome;* rather more pleasing if anything. It was the same unemotional shout. The nonsense

words were, I take it, a tribute to Beaumarchais; though hardly so elegant a tribute as Mozart's *Figaro* or Rossini's *Il Barbiere*. The wind instruments supplied body to the music, and the piano an unostentatious background. The honours of the contest fell to percussion, which discoursed with tremendous vigour. I felt as I listened that the piece ought to have a name; for, like Mary Rose's island, it was without one. A tone-poem without a name! My mind ran through the poets to find an appropriate title. As in a flash it came upon me—*Prince Agib!*

> His poetic spirit rolls
> In the melody of souls,
> Which is pretty; but I don't know what it means.

I seemed to hear that gifted potentate "strumming marches on the gay theodolite," and "blowing the loud pantechnicon all night," and Alick and Beth singing "that extremely lovely thing, *scherzando ma non troppo, p p p*."

The name, however, is immaterial. The interesting fact was the dominant part played by percussion. Was the effect beautiful, or was it not? I decided, against it; but I did so with regret, for I could not help seeing great virtues in the work. Every bar of it was alive. There was no groping about after effect, nor was it a series of detached, unrelated *motifs*. It was crisp, clear, and concise; but the instrumentation, I felt, was wrong. And now I want to hear some more concertos for percussion instruments accompanied by other groups, in order to discover more clearly what is wrong. Because, when I look back at the great forerunners of Mr. Bliss,

and see what extremely effective use they have made of percussion instruments in subordinate parts, my mind will not furnish any adequate impediment to their use in leading parts. Is it that percussion is, of its very nature, a " super " and can never become an effective " lead "?

XXVI

I HAVE wandered far away from the player-piano and its operator. Yet I have not strayed so far as might appear. For if that giftless amateur desires to become the master of the music he plays, he must, for his own mental and spiritual good, go and listen frequently to music performed by others, and to other forms of music besides that which has been written for the solo pianoforte. It is as well to mention also that I am not setting myself up to be his guide. Assuredly he must be his own guide, or he will never achieve anything. I offer him food for discussion; that is all. But the same, for what it is worth, I offer to others also; and I do so in a pious spirit. It profits me to say these things, else I should not say them. May it profit others to criticise them!

Closely related to this matter of the new tonality, and the new instrumentation, is the question of English, or rather, British music. The close relationship of the two problems, if problems they are, arises from the fact that the recrudescence of music as a native art in these islands belongs to our own times, and concerns musicians, most of whom are vigorously at work at the present day.

There can be no doubt, I think, that this recrudescence was greatly retarded by the peculiar attitude of our people towards the art of music. It is not that English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish people are unmusical. Sensitiveness as to music is neither so

deep-seated, nor so widely diffused among them, as among the Germans, the Czechs, the Poles, and the Hungarians. But they are quite as musical as the French. Yet during a long period, while France produced a succession of brilliant musicians, ranging from Rameau to Saint-Saëns, the British Isles gave to the world nobody of any particular note. Therefore, as was almost inevitable, the art of music came to be regarded here as necessarily exotic. It became a habit of British minds to suppose that no compatriot could ever create music of extraordinary beauty, interest, or distinction ; and that habit of mind was justified, as it was caused, by the fact that no compatriot ever did. From the end of the seventeenth to the closing years of the nineteenth century the outstanding names in British music are the names of respectable mediocrities. For the art of music in its highest sense our countrymen had invariably to look abroad.

And yet, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England, if not the sister countries, had given birth to some of the greatest masters of the early classical period. Only a land rich in native art could have given to the world such masters as Tallis, Byrd, Morley, and Purcell ; for not out of nothingness springs the master mind, but from a visible and tangible social trend. And inquiry will show that, in that long period, which lasted to our certain knowledge from the days of Elizabeth to those of William III, the English were generally spoken of as a people greatly addicted to music, whose choirs were the admiration of civilised Europe.

The sudden cessation of those widespread artistic activities at the close of the seventeenth century is a puzzling phenomenon. It is worth noting, however,

that it was accompanied by a rather similar break—not quite so complete, but still sufficient to attract our notice—in the continuity of English literature. But the latter was quick to revive, while the art of Tallis and Purcell faded away, leaving hardly a remembrance of its glories amongst us.

The decline of English music after the death of Purcell is, indeed, unaccountable. But its failure to revive, as English literature revived, has been ascribed by an eminent musical critic, Mr. Alfred Kalisch, to a very definite cause, namely, the virile and masterful genius of Handel. Handel came and dwelt among us; and, thinks Mr. Kalisch, so deep and abiding an impression did his works make upon English musical taste, that English musicians became incapable of thinking except in terms of Handel. The essentially native art of Purcell was forgotten; the exotic art of Handel filled the minds of men. From Purcell, English music might have developed normally and naturally; from Handel, the child of an utterly alien environment, it could not develop at all. This explanation is plausible to say the least of it. It is true that if we go very deeply into the matter we shall have to ask ourselves questions difficult to answer. But since, however deeply we delve, we cannot strike bedrock, we shall be wise, perhaps, if we agree that the truth lies, at any rate, in that direction, and that the influence of Handel on English music was, on the whole, disastrous.

Truly dreary is the spectacle that follows. Instead of the almost incomparable songs of Purcell, we get "Rule Britannia," "Hearts of Oak." "Toll for the Brave"; followed by "The Death of Nelson" and "Home, Sweet Home." And how feebly fluttered the wings of English music in its efforts to soar to

higher things: Macfarren, Sterndale Bennett, the banal Balfe, the commonplace Hatton! Even the executive branch of the art became exotic. Every performer of note was French, or Italian, or German. Opera had to be performed in foreign languages, because England, once the home of song, could produce no vocalists fit to cope with it. And in opera that tradition was not wholly exorcised until the days of the Great War.

Purcell was contemporary with Dryden, Sullivan with Swinburne, Imagine a blank space in English literature from the time of Dryden to that of Swinburne. That is what it amounts to. Sullivan's name succeeds Purcell's on the list of British composers of real distinction. With Sullivan begins the revival of British music. But even Sullivan, gifted as he was, would hardly have aroused the sleeping beauty, had he taken himself as seriously as Joseph Bennett and other earnest Handelians wished him to do. The genius of Sullivan was essentially akin to that of Johann Strauss and Peter Cornelius. He was by nature a wit. His *forte* was what is commonly known as light music, but what, to distinguish it from the commercially produced music of the street, I would rather call lightsome music. His junction with W. S. Gilbert was the turning point of his career, and it was also the point from which the resuscitation of British music can definitely be dated. He was not a follower of Purcell and Purcell's forerunners. That tradition had vanished, and was not yet to be spirited back into existence. He obeyed the classical models of Germany and Italy, by which the art of music, as we know it, has been shaped.

And what Sullivan did for British music by example, Grove and Parry did by precept and propaganda.

Sullivan undermined the public prejudice against the home product. Grove and Parry initiated a new school of English musical thought, subservient to no other school, and endowed with pride and confidence in its aims. They introduced into English music the same principle which Ruskin had introduced into English painting; the principle of artistic idealism. They sowed the seeds, which presently fructified in a new and distinctive school of musical thought, no longer weakly appreciative, but strongly productive. To Grove and Parry we owe the British composers of the present day, to Sullivan a musical public capable of judging them fairly.

XXVII

It is not for me, an amateur, to attempt a history of British music in modern times. That task, perhaps, is not for any driver of the pen ; at least, until some generations have passed away. And British music may well write its own history, as German music has done. I am putting myself forward, rather, as a propagandist, bitten with a keen desire to attack and break down irrational prejudice. I am no advocate, let me say, of British music as such ; but, within the limitations of my understanding, I am an advocate of good music as such. If it happens to be British, so much the better. A few years ago a lady asked me whether I would join some league or circle established for the purpose of helping deserving but unrecognised British composers into the limelight. I refused. Though I regarded Elgar as one of the greatest masters of the age, I refused. Though the poetry of Delius had taken possession of me, I refused. And if to-day, when Bantock, Vaughan-Williams, Boughton, and Holst have imposed their will upon me, I were favoured with the same request, I would refuse again. And, quite apart from my own guiding principle in this matter, I should have the soundest reason for doing so. In these days musical genius needs no such encouragement. If it is discoverable it will assuredly be discovered ; when it will speak for itself. The rest must take their chance ; and all the leagues and circles on earth will never provide the incompetent with the faculties they lack.

But there is more in it than that. The notion that no musical virtue can arise in the British Isles has almost expired. Nobody regards the art of music as necessarily exotic nowadays, except a few musical hermits of advanced years, who sat in the past at the feet of Benedict. There are many others, however, whose years are not advanced, who display no leaning towards the retired life of the hermit, and who probably never heard of Benedict (a person of no importance historically or otherwise—any musical encyclopædia will tell you all about him) doing their level best at the present time to arrest the development of British music by making a cult of it. The veriest groper after musical ideas, who sets his gropings down on paper and gets them into a concert-room is to them, so he be English, an inspired apostle of the music of the future. This is very bad for the inspired apostle. Unless he is a very level-headed person, he credits the fable so glibly narrated, and supposes that inspiration, unaided by the stern discipline of study, labour, and self-control, will carry him directly to Parnassus. And so, instead of seeking virtue outside himself, he goes on groping for it within himself ; until he gropes himself away to obscurity, and lessons on the pianoforte to schoolgirls. But by that time, of course, his fickle admirers have long forgotten him, as well they may, having never had any serious reason for admiring him.

If you hunted up the records of some orchestral institution, like the Leipzig Gewandhaus, you might, and probably would, find upon its concert programmes of many years ago the names of scores of composers who have passed into complete oblivion. It would astonish you to discover how many stupendous

symphonies, brilliant concertos, and heroic overtures had faded away into utter silence, never again to be heard on earth. The thought might sadden you, reflecting on the labour their composition had cost, and the hopes of fame which had spurred their authors on; but you would drive the thought away with a whiff of common-sense, saying to yourself that their fate had shown these works to be worthless, and that the oblivion which had descended upon their creators was not a matter of much regret. But were all those works quite worthless? Did none of them contain the germs of something noble and beautiful? Were there not, among all those forgotten composers, a few who had in them the divine fire, but whom the untimely adulation of their friends or of some crankish clique of apostle-discoverers, turned from the path of earnest study to the path of blithering conceit, ruining them beyond recall?

I have seen literary careers of the greatest promise stultified by this very thing; and I do not think it unreasonable to suppose that a good deal of musical promise is brought to nought in the same way. British music has a clear road ahead of it. Its significance is a matter of international recognition. The less fuss we make about it, as British music, the better; that is my opinion. Whatever principle we may adopt in matters of commerce, we must be free-traders in matters of art; or we shall surely kill our art with comfort. It is well to take note of this: that most of our best literary work to-day is being done by authors who were famous fifteen or twenty years ago; and we do not see among the younger pen-drivers many who are worthy to succeed them. Well, here is British music, alive and vigorous after a prolonged slumber. The genius of Sullivan,

the example of Parry and Grove, have awakened it to life. Let it develop in freedom, then; let it grow of the force that is in it. We have great musical names in this country to-day—Bantock, Delius, Vaughan-Williams, Holst, and, above all, Elgar, the master, the true successor of Wagner, Brahms and César Franck. It will be regrettable if new names are not added to the list in the years to come. But it will not be altogether surprising. The one-sided view is the short-sighted view, and no good can ever come of it.

There, at any rate, is a warning given in all sincerity. It is the most an amateur can be expected to offer.

XXVIII

A BREAK in the continuity of our revived music would be a calamity, all the more melancholy because it is clearly avoidable. It is in conformity with certain sane and temperate artistic ideals that the art of music has been enabled to take fresh root in our national life. Upon the continued sanity and temperateness of those ideals the vigorous expansion of that art in the future depends. It is not the possibility of a new Handel working his will upon us that we have to dread, but the poisoning of our national art with vain and unnecessary conceits ; a danger which threatens every idealistic movement in these days on account of the reckless publicity which is invariably given to it. Advertisement is infinitely more prejudicial to the development of true artistic worth than neglect could ever be.

I am firmly of the opinion that we can give no better encouragement to our own art than by extending the warmest welcome to all that is best in contemporary foreign art. By all means let our music be national, but by any means let us keep nationalism at arm's length. The spirit of nationalism is in its origin unrelated to art, and in its influence detrimental to art. Artists, as artists, should abhor and repudiate it. It fills the soul of the artist with fatal irrelevancies ; it narrows his outlook ; it pens him in and destroys his freedom of movement. Art knows no frontiers. It may be national in the sense

of taking inspiration from the common virtues of the people, and from the glories that colour their history; but a touch of local prejudice or animosity is ruination to it. The decay of music in Germany can be traced in a very great degree to the spirit of excessive nationalism which permeated German thought after the triumph over France in 1870; the enlightened cosmopolitanism of Handel, Gluck, Beethoven, Schumann, Goethe and Heine giving place to an intellectual exclusiveness similar to that of the Chinese, and quite as absurd; and culminating, so far as music was concerned, in the massive and conceited pedantry of Max Reger. Our "English school" cranks, if they had their way, would launch the good ship, British music, upon the same trackless ocean, where eternal fog hangs heavy on the grey and dreary wastes of water.

The most hopeful sign at the present day is the revival of public appreciation for the works of the old masters of English music. Purcell has come into his own among us after two centuries of neglect. Byrd has been rediscovered. The works of these composers are masterpieces of national art. They are, to all English music, what the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton are to English literature; with this important difference, however, that the language of music is the same in one country as another. Those, therefore, who would go to Byrd and Purcell for precept and example, cannot escape from the influence of Domenico Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Bach and Rameau; nor is it desirable that they should.

The influence of the old masters, strongly flavoured with the folk-music of the days before music was an organised and cultivated art, has crystallised in a

delightful manner in the compositions of Rutland Boughton, whose name I might have included in the list of the great, had I been more thoroughly acquainted with his works. But his career as a composer is intensely interesting. It can be best expressed in a paradox. He has progressed upwards and backwards from Wagner, just as Rossetti progressed upwards and backwards from Raphael. This does not mean that Rossetti was as great as Raphael, or that Boughton is as great as Wagner. Its true meaning is that each, consciously or unconsciously, came to realise where lay the foundation of his original model. In Rossetti's case Raphael pointed, not to Lely and Fragonat, but to Giotto and Botticelli ; in Boughton's, Wagner has pointed, not to Strauss and Puccini, but to the masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to the basic music of the Catholic Church, and to the melodies of the countryside. I cannot help feeling that there is more to be discovered in Boughton than in Schönberg or Stravinski.

The position of Boughton among British composers is unique. The position of Ethel Smyth is still more so. Not only is she the first woman musician of the age, but she is the only woman who has ever written music of any real significance. She has had no predecessors of her own sex, and apparently she has no successors. She stands alone and unrivalled ; for the music of Chaminade, though superficially pretty, has no significance at all. Ethel Smyth's work presents no difficulty to the critical listener. It is broadly melodious, and resembles the classical, or modern-classical models upon which it is based. In the historical sense it belongs to the Berlioz-Wagner period, not to the Scriabine-Ravel period. Dame

Ethel Smyth speaks with dignity and assurance, and in a style which cannot be impeached ; but she tells us nothing new. And when you come to view her work comprehensively you cannot but be aware of a certain loosenesss of construction, which is too often apparent in the works of British composers. You miss that entirely satisfying effect which the works of the great masters provide. When you hear *The Wreckers*, for example, you feel that the composer has not done ample justice to her excellent gift of melody, and you cannot help contrasting the somewhat patchy effect of that music with the closely knit structure of the work of Puccini and Richard Strauss. Viewed in segments, Ethel Smyth's music is masterly ; but considered as a whole it does not convey that impression. It is refined, it is full of pleasing moments, but it is not great. For my own part I feel that this lady was unfortunate in succumbing so whole-heartedly, as she evidently did, to the influence of Beethoven and Wagner. As a composer of brief and vivid tone-pictures she might almost have taken rank with Schumann.

It used to be asserted that her music suffered from neglect at the hands of the public, and that all her work was condemned unheard because she was a woman. The assertion, made though it was with the authority of distinguished names, failed to hold together under the acid test of investigation. For Bantock, Delius and Boughton were neglected no less than Ethel Smyth, while the works of Chaminade, whose sex was a matter of common knowledge, had a popularity far beyond their deserts. The neglect had the same cause in every case, the survival of the old-time prejudice against British music of any sort ; a prejudice which weakened year by year, as its

upholders passed away, or came to their senses.

But is it not rather extraordinary that this lady should stand alone among women writers of music? I am under the impression that at nearly every school of music in the civilised world the female outnumber the male students by a considerable margin, and have so outnumbered them for many years past. Is it that they neglect that side of music which bears upon the art of composition, and devote themselves almost entirely to the executive side? That may be the case; but if it is, it is still more strange that women so rarely are found among the great virtuoso instrumentalists. We have been assured by a brilliant young lady who desires to represent an English borough in Parliament, that, though men may excel in brute strength, they are nowhere in it with women when it comes to brains. The assurances of brilliant young ladies with legislative ambitions cannot be put aside with contempt. Evidently the brilliant young lady, with the aid of her superior brains, has discovered a hidden truth. But it makes the position of women in music, an art in which brute strength has few opportunities to excel (except in the case of the man who blows the bellows for a church organ) decidedly perplexing. Perhaps it is that the art of music is exemplified in its highest and truest sense by those who listen to it, rather than by those who compose and perform it

XXIX

I REFRAIN from plunging any deeper into the waters of controversy. After all the matter was settled, so far as arguments could settle it, several years ago. Arguments, it is true, never altered facts; but in these enlightened days we are no longer in thrall to the eternal verities. We know a trick worth two of that. We manufacture our own verities, designed in every way to fit into our preconceptions. That is where brains triumph over brute strength.

I leave these problems to solve themselves, if they can. (They can't; but that is neither here nor there.) And I invite you to accompany me for the last time to my overloaded music cupboard, and inspect a music-roll which dwells there solitary in the crowd. It is *Rosen auf dem Suden* by Johann Strauss. It is light music, dance music; it has never been performed by the Classical Concert Society, nor at Symphony Concerts; to the elect it counts for less than nothing. But here it dwells, cheek by jowl with Weber and Bizet, a source of comfort and joy to its proprietor. I fain would possess the *Thousand and one Nights* also; but of that piece I could only obtain an odious paraphrase, which, having been played once, was returned to the makers by the next post.

Light music! But why not? A breath of inconsequence now and again is delightful and refreshing. And were there ever such charming expressions of inconsequence as those waltzes of Johann Strauss? It is a healthy inconsequence, full of sunshine and generous laughter; nothing *blasée* and degenerate

about it, nothing hectic, nothing cynical. Such melody! That old Danube has been a wonderful source of inspiration. Higher up, in Salzburg,* dwelt Mozart ; and here, in beautiful Vienna, arose Schubert and Johann Strauss. I know no melodies so expres sive of pure joy as those of Johann Strauss. Anger and discontent cannot endure them, but melt away at their onset.

There is grace in this light music, and there is dignity ; for it is the work of a true musician, who knew how to deal with broad melodies. It displays no finnicking excrescenses ; it is free from any suggestion of maudlin sentiment. It is clean and beautiful—and popular. And because it is popular, and because it was intended to be popular, its appearance in company with the classics shocks the elect. Weber's *Invitation à la Valse* would have shocked them too, but for the fact that it was composed by Weber.

Did I say that the music of Johann Strauss was popular ? Alas! The sun of its popularity has set. It is not to *Rosen auf dem Suden*, the *Thousand and one Nights*, and *Kunsterleben* that Vienna, and Paris and London dance nowadays. They have found new dances and new melodies.

But here I must enter upon a short digression. I have referred now and again to public taste in matters of music. It is not only a very small part of the public that is interested in the better sort of music, but it is a very small part of the educated public. A few years ago Sir Henry Wood estimated that not more than ten thousand people were regularly

* To be geographically accurate, Salzburg lies on the Salzack, a tributary stream; but the Danube has absorbed it long before it reaches Vienna.

in the habit of attending concerts of good music in London. The taste for good music has undoubtedly spread since then ; but I do not suppose that the number of concert-goers has more than doubled. It is well known that Sir Dan Godfrey and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra have to perform many programmes of the lightest kind of music (*pot-pourris* of musical comedy airs, and that sort of thing), to pay for the loss on the symphony concerts. Other organisations have to be financed from outside with the same object. The plain truth is that out of every four hundred people (in this country at any rate) three hundred and ninety-nine have no taste for good music, no knowledge of it, and no desire to hear it.

But there is a kind of music (I am clear of the digression now), which the three hundred and ninety-nine know very well, like very much, and desire to hear a great deal. It differs from what we call good music by reason of one thing concerning it : the fact that, though it is always present, and always popular, it is always changing. The air to which everybody is dancing this year, which everybody is humming and whistling, will be as good as forgotten next year, and in ten years' time hardly anybody will remember that it existed.

That is one special peculiarity of the popular air. Another is its almost invariable failure to please those who take a delight in the greater works of music. To them it sounds, with rare exceptions, an utterly empty, dreary, and meaningless thing ; lacking power, refinement, and beauty ; flat and featureless ; the epitome of the dull and commonplace. It seems to have sprung out of nothing and to indicate nothing. It seems, in almost every case, to be the

attempt of some perfectly unimaginative, unpoetical and thoughtless sort of person to express himself in music, and precisely on a par with the attempts of similar persons to express themselves in words. It possesses, one feels, the poetry of an advertisement; the kind of language, to which it is a parallel, is the language of commercial correspondence; it points to the kind of life that enjoys neither colour nor distinction—the drab, hackneyed, indiscriminate life of the dwellers in a modern city.

But it is not folk-music, as some would suggest. Folk-music takes rise in the very soul of the people. The modern popular music has nothing to do with the soul of the people. It is manufactured by members of the middle class, and put on the market as a commercial product. If it could be created by machinery in factories, it would be created by machinery in factories. As this is impossible, the next best thing is done to ensure mass production—each producer copies the others as closely as he can without infringing their copyright. There are the same cadences in all these pieces, and they are treated in the same way. They are as full of *clichés* as the leading articles in the popular kind of daily paper. And this accounts in large measure for their popularity. It is the familiar rather than the strange that takes the public fancy.

I do not refer to the tinkle-tinkle of musical comedy, which, however trite and uninspired it may be, does possess, at any rate, an element of refinement, and represents, in most cases, an attempt to produce music on the model of Johann Strauss, Planquette, and Sullivan, and thus, in a genealogical sense, on that of Mozart and Schubert. Sometimes, indeed, that kind of music gives the listener the impression

that its composer could create something really interesting and charming, if he would only pay a little less attention to the reputed tastes of the play-going public. I have often thought that Lionel Monckton's gift of strong, vigorous melody might have been turned to better account than it was, and that Hermann Finck might make a good deal more of his music than he does. That is by the way. The point is that music of this description becomes popular, if it does so, by virtue of the kind of entertainment with which it is associated, and that it never becomes the most popular kind of music.

The same thing is true of that type of sentimental ballad which is "of the drawing-room drawing-roomy." The tradition it obeys is sound enough; but it obeys the tradition unintelligently. Hence its strong appeal to that large body of people whose morality is based upon unintelligent obedience to traditions. It addresses such people in their own language. It leaves unsaid all those things which such people would rather not say. It is the characteristic minstrelsy of the dull respectable. But it is not the music of the great mass of people.

The kind of music I refer to does not aim at being pretty or sentimental. It is subject, like the clothes we wear, to slight alterations in form as time goes on; but its character remains unaltered. It is vigorously rhythmic; but, lacking beauty as it does, its vigour suggests, not strength, but merely restlessness. Its melodic invention is insignificant (except where it borrows melodies from the great masters); its harmonic features are monotonously conventional; and it contains about as much of the atmosphere of romance as you will find in a warehouse. Its value

as an aid to dancing I do not discuss. As music it has no value at all.

Why discuss it, then ? Well, for one thing, certain " interests " (" interests " being individuals, as every reader of Stephen Leacock is aware) have been trying to persuade us that this plebeian music is charged with artistic significance and contains the germs of the noblest endeavours of the future. For my own part I cannot believe that our culture is so primitive as all that. But, in any case, we have heard this sort of story before. During the palmy and peaceful days of King Edward a certain comic opera was introduced among us, which culminated in and centred around a very ordinary waltz tune ; and we were informed that the vocalist who had to plumb the emotional depths of this ordinary waltz tune found the effort almost too much for her. In fact the *Liebestod* and the final scene from *Die Götterdämmerung* were nothing to it. And have we not come across preliminary notices of works of literature, in which we are led to believe that a new Fielding or Balzac has arisen amongst us, only to discover there the Leacockian " snoopopath " in all his glory, talking like an ass, and behaving like an imbecile ? So when the tunes which the telegraph boy, the chemist's boy, the greengrocer's boy, and the plumber's boy whistle upon our doorstep are represented to us as having no less artistic significance than the music of *The Dream of Gerontius*, *Le Sacré de Printemps*, and *Pelléas et Mélisande*, we are justified in feeling incredulous. The youths in question care about as much for the music of Bach and Mozart as a Polynesian tattoo artist for the paintings of Leonardo and Titian ; and we are asked to accept their taste as a guide to our immediate betterment

and ultimate salvation. Why so in music more than any other sphere of art ?

Society in civilised countries is divided into categories, which we call classes. The average social reformer is apt to base this division upon wealth, and upon wealth alone. By the social reformer I mean the person who not only is conscious of the evil effects of poverty on those who have to endure it, but has a definite theory in his mind's eye for the reconstruction of society on a fairer basis. There is no thoughtful person, however, who does not see what the social reformer sees, and quite as clearly as he sees it ; but most of us feel that there is a danger in the application of rigid theories to human society. And to some of us, at any rate, it appears that social distinctions, and the antagonisms which inevitably arise from them, base themselves upon the equipment rather of the mind than of the purse. It is true that a richly equipped mind is largely the result of a generous education, and that a generous education can seldom be had save at a heavy price ; but the intellectual are not always the rich, nor the ignorant always the poor. To speak of the ignorant and uncultured is, indeed, to name the majority of those who subsist on the lower economic levels ; but culture as often arises from penury, as barbaric ignorance from a superfluity of riches. And it is perfectly accurate to say that the dislike and contempt mutually felt and expressed by rich and poor, is greatly exceeded by the dislike and contempt mutually felt and expressed by the cultured and the uncultured. For this reason, I, among others, look upon education as the first essential of any serious plan of social adjustment.

The average social reformer does not agree with

me in this. Considering social distinctions, as he does, to be purely economic, he leaves the equipment of the mind out of his calculations altogether. It is not my business to dilate here upon the theory and practice of political economy. For my present purpose it suffices to point out the danger arising from their dehumanisation. If you learn to regard human beings as mathematical units, you lose sight of the individuality which shapes their characters and lives and is the groundwork of the pattern of society. In their condemnation of the needless evils which beset so many individuals under our present social system, I am with the most ardent social reformers among us ; but when, instead of expressing a desire to infuse the whole community with a higher culture, so that it may become its own saviour, they propose to equalise society economically on its present basis of intellectual inequality, their road is no longer mine.

Social sanity is the result of individual wisdom. Individual wisdom is the result of a high culture. A high culture is mainly the result of prosperity, or rather of that freedom which seldom can be won save through prosperity. It is absurd to say that those who have never enjoyed that freedom are in a position to enjoy the advantages it gives. The social reform which is started on the assumption that the uncultured are already the salt of the earth, and with the intention of reconstructing society in their interests, and moulding it upon their pattern, is but a retrogressive movement, levelling all things down to the lowest common measure of comfort and intelligence. The fact which we have to face is that the great mass of people, whether poor or rich, is almost destitute of culture, and quite incapable, as

it stands, of assimilating, and making use of those gifts which culture brings. And among those gifts are refined and elegant tastes. Almost everybody is capable of possessing and utilising such tastes. There is no human reason why they should not be the general rule among us. But the fact remains that they are not, and that those tastes which do form the general rule are anything but refined and elegant.

It is no part of this treatise to indicate any general remedy for these evils. I am merely pointing to them as facts explaining the vast output in art forms of works which are essentially inartistic, and which, appealing as they do to the shallower emotions, are effectively detrimental to the spread of culture beyond the confines of a small class. And when we observe how weak and incipient is the growth of culture as yet among those who, being prosperous, have the freest access to its bounties, we can hardly be surprised at the dependence of society in general on the product of inferior minds for all the foundations of pleasure.

From idealism spring the peace and happiness of mankind; from art springs idealism. All things that militate against the spread of artistic culture, militate against the welfare of society. Rhetoric undermines the power of reasoning and encourages the growth of prejudice; maudlin sentiment drives away romance, and wrests from man his faculty of creating noble visions; sensationalism destroys the sense of values; inferior art-work cramps and deadens the æsthetic sensibilities, and shuts the mind away from the sense of beauty and the desire for it. On a basis of rhetoric, sentiment, sensation and artistic crudity, society can never move freely towards its own betterment; and any attempt to propel it

forward along materialistic lines can only result in the aggravation of the very evils that beset it.

I address myself, therefore, to those who love and cultivate the fine arts. I appeal to them no longer to hug to themselves, like misers, the wealth of culture they enjoy, but to go about disseminating and diffusing it. Fine art is the expression of the highest that is in man ; and anything said or done, which turns the thoughts of men towards the highest things, is a direct contribution towards the upbuilding of a newer and nobler social state. This popular music that dins into our ears is the music of materialism, the force which will bring us low, and destroy our culture, unless we take measures to meet and fight the monster on its own ground.

That is the thought which makes me detest the sight and sound of all this commercially produced pseudo-art. It is the sign-manual and the voice of an active, relentless enemy—a great destructive idiot creature, filled with venom, and straining to break loose from the bonds of tradition and law, and destroy all those works of men that bring light into the life of the world.

XXX

When you lend your mind to the consideration of art, you give it to the consideration of life. So Tennyson, Ruskin, and Morris discovered ; so Goethe and Wagner discovered. Art expresses the individual ; but the individual expresses mankind. All art, and any art, reflects the society in which it takes birth. Talk about propagating the blessings of culture, and you find yourself face to face with the whole problem of education. It seems clear to me that musical culture will never develop to any great extent, if it is separated from all other culture and learning. It can become widespread only when a general culture has prepared the ground for it. The same is true of any branch of culture considered by itself.

On the other hand, each contributes towards the whole. Every additional opportunity given to the mass of the people to hear good music, every free library, every free art-gallery, is a point gained for idealism in the war against materialism, and for the civilising and emancipating forces against the powers of barbarism and enslavement. It must suffice here to take note of that ; and we must pass on to our more particular problem—how to disseminate this art of music.

Concerts for the people ; that is the idea, is it not ? Yes, but for how many people ? Take London, for example. To do the thing effectively I estimate

that it would be necessary to arrange about a thousand concerts every week. I hear a certain kind of cheerful and helpful person exclaim: "Yes, why not? A thousand concerts? Certainly! Let us form a committee, and see how they can be arranged." For my part, I am not staggered by big figures, which are often quite as easy to handle as little ones; but I see a few difficulties. Are there enough competent artists to go round? Possibly there are, if we take every sort of musician, and let him or her give a solo recital to the allotted audience of disciples. Still, even so, some of the recitals might fall rather flat, and, indeed, impart the wrong sort of persuasion altogether. The unaccompanied soprano, for example; the solo double-bass, or piccolo. The situation, of course, would have a certain Gilbertian humour about it; but the final laugh, I think, would be with the saxophone and mouth-organ experts.

And if, on the other hand, you give a concert on a grand and impressive scale in Hammersmith or Hackney, it is but a Barmecide feast that you provide for Kilburn and Camberwell. Indeed, at that rate of proceeding, the odds are long upon your losing your battle; because Jazz, or whatever machine-made substitute for Jazz the future may provide, is hard at it all the time, blaring away in public and private, and triumphantly achieving for millions what the masterpieces of music hardly achieve for hundreds. The masterpieces take us, the cultivated ones, out of our cultivated selves; but for those, to whom fortune has not distributed the blessings of culture, the crudest expressions of art may serve a similar end. Similar, but not quite the same. We can gauge the difference more nicely if we swop horses and get astride of literature for a moment. A Fellow

of an Oxford college, let us say, amuses himself after the labours of the day by reading the Dialogues of Plato. His housemaid amuses herself by reading the serial story in a penny illustrated paper. To all appearances the effect is the same; but beyond appearances the similarity does not go. The mind of the housemaid is merely nudged aside out of the somewhat sordid cares of a life sacrificed to donkey-work, into an atmosphere of silly sentiment, which, followed to its logical end (by good fortune an impossibility) would carry her mentally and morally down to a sub-human stratum of existence. The mind of the don, on the other hand, is lifted above the worries of imparting knowledge to the vacancies of youthful intelligence, into a region of serene and lofty thought, prolific of ideas which expand and multiply on the ever-broadening horizon; until he finds himself approximating mentally and morally to the super-human. And it is with music exactly as with literature. Great music and paltry music both have power to distract the human mind from its own cares; for that is the secret of all melody, and the reason for its existence as a form of human expression. But while the ultimate effect of great music is to exalt, that of paltry music is to debase.

Give great music to the people then. Possibly; but I do not feel quite confident of the result. Some persons of every class have the appreciation of great music born in them; but not many. The majority is capable of being educated up to that appreciation. Everyone who can hum or whistle the National Anthem or *Home, sweet Home* correctly, is capable with training of taking a delight in *I attempt from love's sickness to fly*, and *Am stillen herd*. But the training is essential. Let us pass over again to our

literary parallel. Let us suppose that the don is pained at the thought that his housemaid should debase her mind with literary trash, and wishes to put her in a better way of thinking. Is he going to offer her the Dialogues of Plato, even in Jowett's English translation, by way of introducing her mind to higher things, and making her take a pleasure in them: *The Republic* for example, or *Parmenides?* Hardly, I think. Even the detached mind of a professor would scarcely anticipate the immediate conversion of a reader of trash into an advanced blue-stocking. Some intermediate stage of progress would naturally suggest itself to him—*The Old Curiosity Shop*, or *The Water Babies*, or *Puck of Pook's Hill*, or something like that. And on those lines the housemaid might rise in time, not to *Parmenides* perhaps, but quite conceivably to *Vanity Fair.*

So, therefore, in introducing good music to those who know it not, I should ignore the few who have a native aptitude for appreciating the most subtle and complex forms, and set out to attract the ear of the majority with something more immediate in its appeal. Almost every one of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* would serve this purpose. So would the Hungarian Dances of Brahms, the Slavonic Dances of Dvořák, many of Grieg's *Lyrische Stücke.* I should recommend, also, the Kreisler pieces for solo violin, and simple melodies like Raff's *Cavatina* and Tchaikovski's *Chanson Triste.* For vocal music the beginning should be made with Sullivan, Clay, Gounod, and the best settings of English and Scottish folk-songs; for orchestral music, brilliant and melodious pieces, such as those of Bizet and Chabrier, and works like Mendelssohn's Overture to *A Mid-*

summer Night's Dream, and Schubert's *Rosamunde* ballet music. And, in every form, plenty of Handel, whose music makes a more universal appeal than that of any other composer. That is the sort of thing I should suggest for purposes of education. So many worthy people, who, confident in the excellence of their own tastes, want to propagate those tastes in other circles, persistently defeat their own ends by laying the art on too thick at the outset. Doubtless the thought of offering to the hungry such table-sweepings as the works of Raff and Gounod is deeply shocking to their susceptibilities. And thus the bewildered learner, fresh from memories of *It ain't gonna rain*, and *Yes Mamma !* is overwhelmed and stupified with Schönberg's chamber music, and problems in contrapuntal mathematics by Max Reger ; and departs from the performance resolved never, if he can help it, to listen to "highbrow" music again. How much better it would be if he were allowed to work his way up to these substantial feasts of sound by easy and pleasant stages!

The few concerts or recitals which can be provided for those who cannot afford to pay a commercial price to hear them, must, as I have hinted, be but a drop in the ocean compared with what is needed ; and the utmost that the munificence of a musical-minded Carnegie could do along these lines would be to add a few more drops. Such tentative measures, while they have their limited uses, will carry us no distance at all. If we look upon the fine arts as a great educative and civilising agency, we must take steps to disseminate them much more widely than we dream of at present ; and we must think of every practicable means of doing this.

Now, apart from the fact that the inferior kind of

music harmonises with the environment of great masses of people, how does it reach them so easily, and so unceasingly ? In various ways. It forms the musical bill-of-fare at almost all the cheaper variety theatres, and the musical accompaniment to the screen-shows at most of the humbler picture-houses. It is the stock-in-trade of the street organist, and other itinerant musicians. Yet more intimately it is carried into the homes of the people by the cheap gramophone ; for almost all the cheaper records are of this sort of music ; and the records of really good music, well performed, are generally too costly for the purses of wage-earning families. By such means the inferior music becomes a regular feature in the daily lives of enormous numbers of people. And then, anyone who can learn to vamp upon a piano, vamps it whenever a piano is available ; and every mouth-organ, tin whistle, and accordion takes up the strain ; and every whistler whistles it. And finally it is insinuated into the programmes offered by wireless broadcasting stations, and can be heard by everybody in possession of a crystal set.

No, not finally. For, since it is popular, it is taken up by every sort of band which gives open-air concerts ; and the saxophone, most idiotically monotonous of musical instruments, ululates it in every public dancing place. And when rank and fashion provide days of gala for the sons and daughters of toil, they throw it in as part of the *panem et circenses*. Also the harmonium-accompanied music in many churches and chapels is so irreligiously bad, in both design and performance, that it shepherds the sheep of the devout flock into the very fold of musical banality and depravity, and attunes their senses to all that is harsh and destitute of poetry.

The triumph of bad music is secured by suggestion, by insinuation. Like that disagreeable odour of cooking fish and vegetables which permeates the average seaside lodging-house, it creeps in everywhere. It becomes part of the daily life of the great majority of people. But where bad music can find its way, good music can find its way also. It does so already to some extent through the broadcasting stations. It is played a good deal in the better class of picture-houses. The regimental bands are not averse to it; and it is heard in churches where there happens to be an enthusiastic clergyman or organist. But, compared with the incessant dinning of its inferior rival, its efforts are feeble and fitful. The issue of really cheap gramophone records of good music, well interpreted, would be more effective than all these things put together.

XXXI

But my own experience has shown me another thing. To cultivate the appreciation of good music quickly, and beyond all risk of backsliding, you must perform it yourself: you, by your own action, in obedience to your own will, must call it into existence. You become then the musician, the interpreter. And to interpret is to create. Here the player-piano comes in.

At once there rises to the mind a practical objection. The player-piano is a very costly instrument. Even an upright player-piano costs almost as much, in capital figures, as a working-man's house. And an ample provision of music-rolls entails no small expenditure.

True. But working-men who dwell in towns often have clubs where they meet; and working-men in rural villages have village institutes; and a piano is often to be found in such places. Moreover it happens not infrequently that these institutions are endowed, wholly or in part, by wealthy individuals or corporations, desirous of promoting the public welfare. And now imagine, installed in any such place, through outside benevolence, a player-piano with a liberal selection of the works of the great masters. It is more than possible, it is almost certain, that, in that case, a genuine love of all that is best in music will be implanted in many minds from which it is absent at the present time. There is the familiar case of the house-master at one of the public schools,

who, being himself a keen musician, wished to convert the barbarian tastes of his charges into something more in keeping with the culture which it was the purpose of the school to impart. And so he presented the house with a player-piano and a number of rolls of the best music, interspersed with examples of lighter stuff; and the boys, or the older ones, at any rate, were free to play the machine in their moments of leisure. At first they concentrated on the lighter music, because, as they explained to the master afterwards, they believed the classical pieces would bore them. But by degrees, as he anticipated, they broached the classics; until, after a lapse of time, the lighter music was neglected altogether. In the end he asked them to write down in order the names of their favourite pieces; and it was a symphony of Brahms that got the greatest number of votes. He may have distracted a few of the boys from the path of earnest study; but the result in most cases was to sow the seeds of true artistic understanding in minds from which it had hitherto been utterly remote.

This is an interesting case; but there is nothing surprising about it. Allow that a human being has what we call an "ear" for music; and, given the chance of putting different kinds of music to a comparative test, it is practically certain that he will come in the end to prefer that which is the most poetical and makes the strongest appeal to the emotions. It may be difficult for him to grasp at first; but ultimately, with a fair chance, it is sure to win the day. There will be divergences in taste, of course, between one person and another, because no two individuals are built quite alike. The difference between the work of one composer and another

reflects this same divergence. So in the case of one listener or interpreter and another, temperament will have its way. But in essentials the result will be the same. Your former lover of the crude and shallow may become a Wagnerite, or swear by Handel, or find sanctuary in Mendelssohn ; but in each case he will have moved from barbarism to culture, and be infinitely better placed than he was before to make a similar move in other branches of art and knowledge. And whatever can be effected among schoolboys of the middle class, downright barbarians almost all of them, can certainly be effected among adult working men, gifted with a sense of responsibility and amenable to reason.

I feel sure that the player-piano is, for the reasons I have stated, almost the most effective means of propagating the knowledge of good music and the desire for it. But there are further ways that suggest themselves. Choirs and glee-clubs, for example, by which much useful work has already been accomplished in Wales and the North of England, and which, in countries like Switzerland and South Germany, are the basis of a popular taste for music, far superior to ours. Here again the pupil himself becomes the interpreter ; and keenness is awakened by the introduction of the element of competition. I do not imagine, however, that these organisations will ever attract more than a limited number of people to their ranks, until a higher standard of taste has been widely implanted by other means. Investigation will almost certainly show that most of those who join popular glee-clubs and similar bodies, have already been given a musical start in life by singing in church and chapel choirs, where a fairly high level of performance is maintained ; and that

few outsiders are attracted to them. Here one perceives the advantage of community singing (including practice under competent instructors) in places of worship. English people—the men in particular—have good singing voices as a rule, and need only a little training, and a little example, to use them with excellent effect.

But before this kind of thing can do very much good, a sweeping reformation of our religious music is needed. The greater part of it is very indifferent stuff, trite and obvious, and suggestive of nothing particularly noble or beautiful. Some of it is sugary and sentimental to the point of being positively sacrilegious. Some of it is ugly, brutal, and bad. Such of it as is really good is not often performed save at large and fashionable places of worship, attended chiefly by the class of people who go to good concerts, and practise excellent music in their own homes. Here is a labour of love for some enthusiast to undertake—the revision of our church music, so as to make it both simple and beautiful. At the present time much of the beautiful music which is heard in churches is far too difficult for any congregation to sing, while most of the simpler music is so poor as to have no educational value at all.

And sadly we need a new Sullivan.

XXXII

A GENERATION has passed since Sullivan died, and no successor to him has been found. He was, as I have indicated, a great educative force. Not only did he demonstrate to the musical world that a native of these islands could compose music, which, of its kind, had no equal; but the high quality of his essentially popular music had an excellent and very widespread effect on public taste. The Savoy music became, for the time, the pattern of all light music. The insipid tradition of Bishop and Balfe was ousted, and something much more vigorous and sonorous took its place.

So far as it concerned light music, the new tradition barely outlived Sullivan, because there was no one like him to take his place. Sidney Jones in such pieces as *The Geisha* and *The Greek Slave* wrote pretty airs, and harmonised them in a graceful and imaginative way; but they were without dramatic suggestion, they signified nothing, they were just mildly pretty, and no more. Lionel Monckton gave us something more lively and vigorous; but everything he produced had a touch of mob-oratory about it, and you felt that it was deliberately vulgarised to catch the uneducated ear. Alfred Cellier wrote charming melodies, resembling those of the French *opéra bouffe* school; but his music was too shallow to leave any permanent impression on the mind, and as undramatic as that of Sidney Jones. These

composers were all subject to the Sullivan tradition ; but they had not Sullivan's imagination and originality ; nor did they appear to have his wide knowledge and appreciation of the work of the great masters. You never heard of them conducting performances of Handel, Mozart and Beethoven, as Sullivan frequently did.

A more conscious effort was made to keep the Sullivan tradition alive by Edward German ; and in *Merrie England* he composed light opera music of a very high order. He was hampered, however, by the fact that his collaborator, Basil Hood, was not by any means a Gilbert, and by the fact that he himself did not share, and could not acquire, Sullivan's uniquely cosmopolitan outlook. Almost every bar of German's music was, or rather is (for he is among the living composers of to-day), based upon a certain type of English folk-melody. His peculiar idiom fitted the text of *Merrie England*, and gave it exactly the right musical atmosphere ; but in *A Princess of Kensington*, where the setting was modern, the music, though even better than that of *Merrie England*, seemed quite out of place. One admired the music, but regretted the misfit. Sullivan, whose music was, as music, no better than that of Edward German, could bring his guns to bear in any direction with equal effect. You have only to take those three successive operas *Princess Ida*, *The Mikado*, and *Ruddigore* to see this. In *Princess Ida* he catches the pseudo-Tennysonian flavour of the book exactly, adding the necessary Weberian romantic touch. The music of the *Mikado* is suggestive of Japan, but indicative of an inconsequence which is truly occidental. In *Ruddigore* you get the flavour of Sir Roger de Coverley and " The Mistletoe Bough,"

with, here and there, a suggestion of Dibdin. There has never, perhaps, been any composer quite so versatile as Sullivan. His versatility was half the secret of his success; but it also accounts for his failure to take rank among the Olympians. The greatest artists express *themselves* far too strongly in their works ever to be really versatile.

But Edward German could not maintain the Sullivan tradition. His own music, delightful in every way, did not serve the same purpose as Sullivan's, and was not attractive to the same people. And there was no one else. Sullivan proved to be as irreplaceable as Gilbert. Nothing like either of them has appeared since their day, to the great loss of wit, and to the greater loss of light music. And so there was left a gap to be filled. The old kind of popular music was played out; the days of the Cave of Harmony (that pit of musical corruption) were no more. America has filled the gap with something more vigorously vulgar than Lionel Monckton in his worst moments could have conceived. But vulgar is too complimentary a term for it. Vulgarity has its virtues.

The popularity of the older kind of light music betokened nothing worse than ignorance, a failing not difficult to remedy. It was banal, colourless and dull, but it was unpretentious, and therefore harmless. It was reminiscent to some extent of folk music, from which it was descended. It was childish and trifling, but it was not unwholesome. The popularity of the newer kind of light music is a more disturbing phenomenon, betokening as it does the diffusion of a dangerously inadequate learning, and the veneering over of a barbarous morality with a shallow gloss of culture. This music is as banal

as the old stuff was, and as insignificant ; but it is pretentious ; it is quite unrelated to the spontaneous melody of the people ; and it is redolent of the feverish night-life of the scum of a modern city population. Instead of happiness it expresses excitement ; and such sentimentalism as it contains is derived from the vivid unrealities of the screen-show and the cheap novel. Its tonality and harmonic colour are copied unintelligently from grand opera and boudoir music, and it is full of showy phrases which proceed from nothing and lead to nothing. The childlike glee of the creole melodies, whence it originally sprang, has long since vanished from it. Only their lilt remains, like some degenerate child of savage freedom enslaved in a corrupt and luxurious civilisation. It is characteristic, this music, of that international "melting-pot," the United States of America, which has absorbed and nationalised the surplus of ordinary people from every European country, without attracting to its bosom any of the intellectual wealth of the old world. It portrays the feverish, stereotyped mediocrity of modern American life. It repeats with insistent emphasis the bitter truth which the blackguard financiers of New York and Chicago have preached by their deeds—that Washington and Lincoln, Longfellow and Emerson, Walt Whitman and Edward MacDowell lived in vain. It explains the voluntary exile of Whistler and Henry James. It is the characteristic art product of the American people.

And on this side of the Atlantic it harmonises with the drab, slovenly ugliness of our festering cities, and with the hopeless, unilluminated, driven existence of their inhabitants. And its emphatic, catchy rhythm, like the crash and clatter of

machinery, drills it into the brains of the multitude.

We want a new Sullivan to meet it on its own ground, to snatch its peculiar rhythm away from it, and give it back to the world transfigured with enchanting melodies ; to carry to every street corner the spirit of gay laughter. And we want a new Johann Strauss to render the same service for our dancing halls. Yes, indeed! And many a like influence to bear on other phases of our sceptical, unrestful public life. My fear is that these very conditions, which favour the spread of an unintelligent materialism, and harden the mental while they weaken the moral fibre of men and women, will stifle the growth of any Sullivan or Johann Strauss who may appear among us. If we wait for any such vessel of light, we shall wait, I fear, in vain.

No ; we, who would fain spread enlightenment and have faith in the illuminating power of the fine arts, had better see what can be done along those other lines. Whatever is done must be completely free from any suggestion of the " highbrow " element. The superior setting out to convert the inferior are doomed to failure from the start ; but the gifted,—a term which I use in its widest sense—getting to work to distribute the fruits of their enlightenment abroad, need only firmness of purpose and commonsense to succeed in large measure.

XXXIII

I DO not propose to go any further into that matter. The possessors of culture are often thoughtlessly selfish, and care little who sinks in the whirlpool of ignorance, so long as they themselves navigate the waters of knowledge in comfort and safety. I have thrown out a hint and a warning to them, and that is all I can do. The next move is with them, if they can rouse themselves to make it. I shall have a word to say presently about art in general, and what I conceive its significance to be. But before I come to that I have still to confess my experiences in a branch of music, hardly touched upon in these pages. I mean the song and its interpretation.

The song differs in essential features from any other form of music, and the singer from any other kind of interpreter. The song as a form of expression, the singer as an artist, belong not only to music, but also to the arts of literature and drama. Singing, as we understand it to-day, is not only musical performance, but poetical recital. This is the general rule; and the only important exception to it serves rather to bear it out than otherwise.

It is possible that the oldest form of music, among that group of races to which we belong, and among which the art has achieved its fullest development, is the recitative chanted to words. Even if it is not the oldest its antiquity is certainly immemorial. And if such savage music as can still be heard may be

taken as a guide, it is probable that this recitative consisted of the constant repetition of one or two musical phrases of a simple character ; the bard, or minstrel altering the expression of his voice to suit the implication of the words, without varying the actual melody. A good deal of church music retains this form up to the present day : the chants of the Cathedral Psalter for example. We can do no more than guess, however, at the character of this early song music ; for we have nothing earlier to go by than the folk-songs of the mediæval period of modern history, which represent an advanced stage of musical development, and belong, indeed, to an age when music was about to be subjected to fixed laws by the civilised artist. These folk-tunes, though they are invariably repeated verse after verse without alteration, yet reflect, many of them, in a marked degree the spirit of happiness or sorrow expressed by the poems they accompany ; so that in them the art of the singer becomes a far more sensitive and flexible thing than it could ever be when he was tied down to the repetition of a meaningless musical phrase.

But when the scholarly, or, as we might call him, the scientific artist began to handle music, and subjected to fixed laws that which hitherto had been a perfectly unfettered form of human expression, he brought about something in the nature of a reaction. Considering music as an art sufficient in itself, he paid far less attention to the interpreting of moods than the old minstrels had done. The monkish chant or chorale (which may have been evolved, or even directly inherited, from the priestly music of the old river civilisations) became his model, instead of the secular ballad ; and the monkish chorale, though sometimes beautiful enough when harmonised, was

in its ancient form hardly expressive of anything. But for a considerable time it was the basis of all written music, whether fitted to words or not ; and its habitual use gave birth to the tradition that the melody was adequate to the words so long as it expressed their metrical rhythm. It needed the genius of many successive masters to kill this tradition. It was still vigorously alive, even in good music, during the eighteenth century, as the works of Arne and Boyce, and some of the works even of Handel, show ; and among the minor lights of music it was alive almost within living memory. In Italian opera, particularly, it died very hard.

The modern song, in which the music voices the sense of the words, or the deeper meaning of the poem, dates from Purcell. The genius of a great singer, such as John Coates, may delude us into the belief that its first faint stirrings are to be found in the music of Byrd and Morley ; but careful analysis will show that the connection between the music of these older songs and the words they accompany is quite arbitrary. In Purcell's songs, on the other hand, the music becomes, for the first time, an adequate expression of the poem, and affords the vocalist (who in most cases has not the art of John Coates) something more than an opportunity for fine voice production. Purcell is the founder of the art of dramatic and poetic singing as we know it to-day. In his hands the music of a song became, for the first time, a part of the poem.

In this sense Purcell was in advance of all his successors up to the time of Schubert. I mean by this not that Purcell's vocal music is greater, as music, than that of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Gluck, Mozart and Beethoven ; but that in Purcell's songs

the union of music and words is more complete, more adequate, and represents a greater departure from tradition.

Schubert, that most instinctive and spontaneous of musical poets, carried this union of music and words to the point almost of perfection. It was his unparalleled spontaneity that enabled him to do this. He wrote many of his songs as another might have jotted down his passing thoughts. For Schubert to appreciate a poem was to fit it with an appropriate melody. He carried the ballad to a point which has never been surpassed up to the present day. In many of his songs the union of words and music is found perfected; and subsequent composers of ballads have but followed in his footsteps.

Wagner's music, the bulk of which is vocal, represents a development of the song parallel to that of Schubert. The complete unity of music and words which he achieved arises from the fact that he created both, and that they took shape in his thoughts together. In many passages of Wagner's music-dramas they are inseparable from one another; while the music is, in some instances, made to express not only the spoken words, but the undercurrent of thought in the speaker's mind. It is worth noting, however, that both Schubert and Wagner achieve their most exquisite beauty in songs, or scenes where the music is less dramatic and more lyrical, and where poetic meaning is suggested rather than directly expressed, and the music echoes the spirit rather than the soul of the poem. It would be difficult to discover, in the whole range of vocal music, anything more beautiful than *Who is Sylvia?* or *Am stillen herd,* though in both cases the music, considered apart, makes no palpable suggestion of

anything beyond itself. And the famous break away from dramatic recitative to lyrical song in the first act of *Die Walküre* (Siegmund's *Spring Song*) is recognised by every student of Wagner's music as one of the finest and most subtle of his dramatic touches. Music cannot be altogether tied down to the ideas which words express, because it is, in itself, an expression of the composer's mind ; and thus the art of song demands the achievement of a pure, lyrical beauty, no less than that of dramatic feeling.

The fact is that the greatest artists cannot bind themselves to any hard and fast tradition. They speak or sing as their spiritual impulses move them. The painful efforts of certain modern composers to give the most minute expression in music to the words which it accompanies are a sure indication that the poetic instinct is weakly developed in those gentlemen.

I do not say that this is a complete and comprehensive history of the song ; for it is nothing of the sort. It is a very brief outline exhibiting the main features of the development of the song, and indicating their character. You have first the natural song, unregulated, or regulated only by the lax ordinances of popular tradition ; and this culminates in the mediæval minstrelsy. Then you have the scientifically artistic song, which really is not song at all, but simply a systematised musical accompaniment to words ; or, if you prefer it (for either way of putting it is equally correct) a verbal accompaniment to a carefully designed piece of music. As this kind of art is too obviously stilted and artificial—as *ars est celare artem*—the true artist finds himself in rebellion against it, and strives to reproduce something akin to the old, traditional minstrelsy, and to

supply in tones of music the natural and appropriate expression to a poetical idea. But, being a trained artist as well as a true one, he is able to reinforce inspiration with ingenuity, and so make music express the meaning of words to an extent which traditional minstrelsy could never have achieved. At the same time, being a true artist as well as a trained one, he will not achieve this triumph at the expense of beauty ; and so, as often as not, he will be content with interpreting the words only in a very general way, and letting the beauty of his music speak for itself.

There are, therefore, three forms of vocal music : the arbitrary conjunction of words and melody ; the dramatic song, and the lyrical song. But as the dramatic and lyrical forms merge extensively into one another, they may be regarded, for purposes of classification, as one form, and as distinct from the other as the art of the mason from that of the bricklayer.

Purcell was far in advance of his time. His songs, considered individually, bear a much closer relationship to the modern song than do the individual songs of any of his great successors up to the time of Schubert. It would seem incredible that such a song as *When I am laid in earth*, for example, could have been written in the eighteenth century ; but that it might have been written in the middle of the nineteenth century would seem perfectly credible. And many of his other songs convey the same impression. Purcell might be styled the Wycliffe of modern song writing. Gluck in the same sense might be called the Savanarola, and Beethoven the Erasmus. Pursuing the parallel we can call Schubert the Martin Luther, and, following it yet further, Wagner the John Knox.

But Bach, Handel, and Mozart are like the saints of the Catholic Church, who held to tradition and glorified it. Their vocal music is pure music, and nothing else than pure music. Almost all of it could be translated quite easily from one poetic idea to another. You could do this with *Slumber beloved*, with *Si, tra i ceppi*, with *Qui, sdegno* (each a gem of melody); but I think you would find some difficulty in dealing likewise with *I attempt from love's sickness to fly*, or *Der Erlkönig*. The distinction can be expressed in names. Bach, Handel, and Mozart wrote vocal music; Purcell and Schubert wrote songs. But all the greater composers meet on the common ground of the pure lyric.

It is necessary to have these distinctions clear in your mind before you can properly judge the art of singing.

XXXIV

EVERY sojourner in the world of music is, or ought to be, aware that there are two distinct schools of vocalism, one which interprets, and one which merely sings. They represent the two kinds of music written for the voice, and the two distinct traditions. The interpreter of songs is the lineal descendant of the minstrel ; the singer of vocal music is descended from the chanting monk or priest. The art of the former is intimate and human ; that of the latter is, in its highest form, unworldly and spiritual, and, in its more ordinary manifestations, factitious and ornamental. Some artists can master both these branches of the art ; but in most cases the one excludes the other, and the artist belongs definitely to one school. Even in the rendering of lyrical songs the two schools can hardly be said to meet ; for the former always tend to interpret the poetry, while the latter content themselves with singing the music. It is very difficult, therefore, to compare the exponent of one school with that of the other. Indeed, it is almost impossible to do so. You can only compare their voices. Their art you cannot compare.

To take a modern instance, it is useless to ask which is the greater singer, Tetrazzini or Gerhardt. Each is supreme in her own art ; but neither practises the art of the other. Each has a faultless voice, and each knows how to use it to perfection for her own purpose. But the purpose of Tetrazzini is not

the purpose of Gerhardt. Beyond their voices you have no basis whereon to make a comparison save the unacceptable basis of your own private tastes.

There lies one great obstacle in the way of forming a judgment on the merits of individual artists. But there is another which is no less serious. You cannot draw a comparison between male and female singers, because, not only do they seldom if ever sing the same music, but the music written for male voices differs markedly from the music written for female voices. In the case of pure vocal music the difference is very great indeed; and in that of the lyrical song it is great enough to put the male singer and the female on different planes. It is only in the most dramatic kind of music that any close similarity is found. Added to this, you cannot compare the voice of a man with that of a woman because of their different *timbre*. You can find practically no ground on which you can compare Gerhardt with Chaliapine, or Tetrazzini with Sammarco; and it would be as absurd for Chaliapine to sing *Die trommel geruhrt*, or for Sammarco to sing the mad scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, as it would be for Gerhardt to sing *The Song of the Volga Boatmen* or Tetrazzini *Largo al factotum*.

Very rare is the vocalist of either sex who can achieve a high proficiency in both branches of the singer's art; and no vocalist, so far as I know (unless it was Jenny Lind) has been perfect in both. Melba, however, who has had no superior in pure vocalism in modern times, has only just failed to reach perfection as a poetic interpreter of songs. Some years ago I heard her, in one concert, sing two pieces by Verdi, *Ah! fors e lui* from *La Traviata*, and Desdemona's *Salce* song from *Otello*; the former a piece of *colora-*

tura work, the latter a most dramatic and poetic song. *Ah! fors e lui* was perfect ; but *Salce,* though rendered in a very poetical way, was not the intensely dramatic thing it would have been had the singer been Destinn for example. But then Destinn's rendering of *Ah! fors e lui* might well have fallen short of Melba's.

If, however, I were asked which of the women singers, performing at the present day, I would prefer to hear before all others, my choice would be neither Melba nor Destinn, but Elena Gerhardt. The music she habitually sings is that which I prefer to all other music written for the voice—the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Hugo Wolf and Brahms ; her voice has a silvery purity rarely excelled ; and she stands pre-eminent among women as a poetical interpreter of songs. Her art as a singer reminds me very much of Ellen Terry's art as an actress. It conveys the same feeling of effortless achievement, and diffuses the same atmosphere of pure poetry.

In singing such as Tetrazzini's (with whose name one may couple that of Galli-Curci), I can discover no poetry, save a kind of poetry of flight or motion. When I listen to such singers I am spellbound by the beauty, power, and flexibility of their voices ; I marvel at their vocal agility ; but my feeling invariably is that I would far rather be listening to some other singer with a less wonderful voice, singing better music, and interpreting it in a more poetic way. This is not simply a matter of taste. *Coloratura* music seems to me an anachronism, a degenerate kind of musical pedantry, meaning nothing, suggesting nothing, leading nowhere. Evidently I throw back to some ancestor who listened rapt to the neolithic

minstrel, in whose art were gathered together all the elements of music, poetry and drama.

In what I conceive to be the true sense of the word, I cannot regard those *coloratura* vocalists as singers at all. Song, to my mind, must be a true interpretation of poetic ideas, or something closely approximating thereto. And poetic ideas are thoughts made clear to us by the beauty of the form in which they are expressed. Clarity is no less an essential of poetry than rhythm and the music of words. When these essentials are transferred to expression by musical tone, the result is song ; and the song may develop into a tone-poem, or song without words, because the idea may be too elusive, or too comprehensive, or too spiritual for words to express without explanation : and explanation is fatal to poetry. But *coloratura* music expresses nothing. It is empty sound. It brings the vocalist down to the level of that gymnastic kind of instrumentalist who gives us trills on the flute, and decorative bleatings on the cornet. I think it a pity that this brainless pedantry should be the quarry of so many gifted artists who might excel in other fields.

Some of the great poetic singers excel in those branches of singing which call for intense dramatic effort ; but I think that dramatic expression has often to be achieved at the expense of vocal purity. This is especially the case in the rendering of Wagnerian music-drama. Take, for example, the music sung by Isolde in the first act of *Tristan*. The singer has not only to render music of exceeding difficulty, but she must express the sense of the words with the same dramatic fervour which an actress would employ in speaking them. She must double,

as it were, the rôles of Adelina Patti and Sarah Bernhardt. The successful accomplishment of such a task makes a considerable strain on her powers. Singing which is too pure and lyrical will not answer the purpose ; and dramatic intensity without a high standard of vocalism will not answer it either.

The *coloratura* artist is apt to sing the lyrical ballad in too formal and colourless a manner. The dramatic singer is inclined to make it too highly coloured. But I call to mind one instance of a great dramatic singer, who was also a great ballad singer. This was the American soprano, Lillian Nordica, whom I regard as one of the greatest women singers of modern times. I was unfortunate enough never to hear Calvé ; but if she excelled Nordica, or Destinn for that matter, in dramatic singing, she must have been wonderful indeed. The German *mezzo*, Matzenauer, impressed me as a very powerful dramatic singer when I heard her a few months before the war ; and one of the most dramatic performances I ever heard was that of Aino Ackte in *The Flying Dutchman* in one of Sir Thomas Beecham's seasons at Covent Garden.

But, impressive as such performances are, I derive greater pleasure from the more lyrical and poetic kind of singing ; and I would rather hear Gerhardt interpreting Schubert than any of the great Wagnerian artists in their particular rôles ; with a reservation, however, in favour of *Die Meistersinger*.

It is exceedingly difficult, as I have said, to compare male with female singers ; but when I come to consider all the singing I have ever heard, it is borne upon me very strongly that the men have given me greater satisfaction, on the whole, than the women. In my earlier recollections of Wagnerian opera the

deepest impression has been left by Jean de Reszke, Edouard de Reszke, and David Bispham. The operas of Verdi and Puccini recall Caruso, Scotti, and Sammarco to my mind rather than Melba and Tetrazzini. And if anyone were to inform me that a greater singer than Chaliapine existed on the face of the earth I should be frankly incredulous.

Caruso was not as great a singer as Chaliapine. Nor was he as great as Jean de Reszke. His voice, of course, was phenomenal, and hardly less so his control of it. There was something rather factitious, however, about his dramatic touches. They were conventional rather than original. He was at his best, perhaps, in those lyrical passages where he could give his voice that insinuating, almost sugary tone, which was so unique. In the mock heroics that figure so largely in modern Italian opera you felt that there was almost too much of him, and that his great voice was bursting out of the trivial music.

But with the masculine singers, as with the feminine, it is of ballad singing, in the best sense of that term, that I have the most pleasant and enduring recollections. Leaving Chaliapine aside (since he, like Nordica, excels in lyrical no less than dramatic vocalism) ; I find that the dramatic art of Caruso, Van Rooy, Sammarco, McCormack and Knüpfer, does not dwell in my memory so vividly or so agreeably as that of George Henschel, Ben Davies, Plunket Greene, Gervase Elwes, and John Coates in the more lyrical forms of song. Gervase Elwes I regarded as almost the truest artist of his time, and perhaps the greatest singer this country has produced within the last half century. His art was as faultless as that of Elena Gerhardt. His singing of Bach and Handel was the pattern of classic purity ; and his manner of

interpreting the German ballads was poetical to the point of being creative. His singing reminded me of Ysaye's violin-playing. He seemed to find his way, as Ysaye did, into the very soul of the music. In Elwes we entertained an angel unawares; for he never received the recognition that was due to him, and was less popular than many a strident voice-producer, and many a sentimental misinterpreter of music, hardly fit to black his boots.

XXXV

MANY of the singers of both sexes, whom I have named, have either passed away, or, as age has diminished their powers, retired from the public stage. And those who figure most prominently upon the active list have, most of them, been familiar to us for several years. The greatest triumphs of the wonderful Chaliapine had been scored before the year 1914; and by that time the fame of Elena Gerhardt was fully established. The same is true of Tetrazzini, John McCormack, Battistini, Dinh Gilly, John Coates, and numerous others who stand prominent before our eyes to-day. In recent years only two singers, Frieda Hempel and Galli-Curci, have taken the musical world by storm. No successor has arisen to those great contraltos, Antoinette Sterling, Muriel Foster, and Kirkby Lunn. No new Gervase Elwes or Ben Davies has appeared, no new Henschel or Bispham, no new Jean de Reszke or Anton van Rooy. Never, indeed, has a greater number of professional singers been before the public eye than there is to-day; but it is something more reasonable than the rooted prejudice of age (for I am not so old as all that) which causes me to doubt whether the talents of more than a few of them rise above the level of useful mediocrity. It seems, in fact, quite evident to me that great vocalists are rarer than they were twenty-five or thirty years ago.

It may be that these things go in cycles. It is

possible that the period which extended from, say, 1894 to 1914, was exceptionally rich in vocal talent, and that the singers of the present time are fully equal to those who flourished in the "seventies" and "eighties." But even one who, like myself, was too young to appreciate such artists, cannot help remembering the widespread celebrity achieved by Patti, Albani, Plançon, Klafski, Sims Reeves, Edward Lloyd, Blanche Marchesi, Janet Patey and many other singers of that time.

It is difficult, I must confess, to resist the impression that the art of vocalism has undergone a decline, either through some deterioration in the vocal organs of people living under modern urban conditions, or else through faulty training in the schools of music. It is, perhaps, in the latter direction that the cause should be sought; and the seeker might possibly discover it in the excessive number of pupils, mostly of the female sex, who aspire to places in the major constellations. We may be coming, in short, to a mass production of vocal artists, giving us a moderately high and perfectly uniform standard of art, proof equally against failure and distinction: the inevitable result of mass production in any branch of industry.

There are, at any rate, far too many singers going about as soloists nowadays, whose ability is not high enough for the part they play. In our army of vocalists there are too many generals, colonels, and captains, and too few sergeants, corporals and privates. The result is doubly unfortunate; for, while there is a superfluity of indifferent solo performance, we stand sadly in need of those choirs and glee societies for which the talents and training of these people would fit them perfectly. Less personal

ambition, more true musicianship—this is what we need at the present time. I would suggest to those who direct the affairs of our principal schools of music, that they should do everything to encourage choral singing among their pupils at the expense of solo work. The really unique soloist will never remain hidden for long in a choir, and, once discovered, can be trained in the way he or she should go ; and the good mediocre talent that remains will give us choirs and operatic choruses of the highest class, and numerous enough to become the basis of our musical life. I am a firm believer in choral singing as a means of creating and maintaining a generally high standard of musical performance. And its development on a large scale would encourage composers to make use of a particularly noble and beautiful form of musical expression.

XXXVI

The amateur singer has been the butt of half the satirists of modern times, not, it must be owned, without meriting it. Nobody objects, of course, to the old-fashioned squire or "squarson," rubicund and hearty, bawling out the jolly hunting song across the festive board. He is extinct in his original form; but his lineal descendant may be found here and there in the ward room of a man-of-war, or in the recesses of a snug country inn of a winter's evening. He is a relic, that jovial person, of the old minstrel days, even though the songs he sings may be but the Brummagem minstrelsy of John Farmer, and similar musical philistines. Nor does anybody object to the raucous worthy of the rural village who "obliges with a bit of a song" at the parish bean-feast. These are not so much amateur singers, as ordinary, unsophisticated folk, with a primitive desire to express themselves in song; and, whatever else they fail to express, they certainly do express themselves.

Such people as these no healthy-minded person dislikes or despises. It is the amateur vocalist *comme il faut*, whom our boot itches to smite if he is masculine, and for whom we feel that the ducking-stool of olden times might usefully be revived if she is feminine. The effrontery, the impudent self-sufficiency of these people, offering to interpret to others an art which they have never been at any pains to master! That they should find pleasure in

singing to themselves I can quite understand. I sing to myself sometimes. But the decent reticence which prohibits cultivated people from making fools and nuisances of themselves ought to prevent them from singing to others, or, at any rate, from expecting others to listen to them. The most charitable supposition I can make concerning them is, that, like the faded dowager who sees the features of Aphrodite before her when she gazes into the looking-glass, they really believe themselves to be Destinns and Carusos, and inflict their bastard art upon us on that assumption.

We have to avoid and ignore them, or, in the worst event, to refrain from applauding them. Meanwhile, amateurs of a more modest disposition may find the use of their singing voices, properly regulated and controlled, a serviceable aid to the understanding and appreciation of good music. The song is the type of all music, as we understand the term to-day; and singing is the most natural and spontaneous form of musical expression. By practising the art of singing to your own satisfaction you help yourself materially to master the interpretation of other forms of music. But it is important to bear two things in mind. Your own satisfaction may not be shared by anybody else; and to sing inferior music (such as drawing-room ballads), will not help you to understand anything. Be modest, but let not your modesty be of the false variety. The great composers no more wrote for professional musicians alone, than the great poets for professional actors alone. They spoke to the whole world. Their songs are yours, just as much as Shakespeare's verses are yours.

Amateur vocalism of the modest sort has at least

this great virtue, that it is always sincerely poetic. The amateur who sings for sheer love of music, and not to show off before others, aspires to achieve no triumphs of vocal technique, and declaims with a healthy originality and indifference to convention. Leaving the question of technique and voice-production aside, the honest amateur often gives a more artistic rendering of songs, and of other kinds of music too, than any of the professionals except the greatest. Some of my most enjoyable and profitable musical experiences have been amateur *concerts intimes*, where the professional element was conspicuous by its absence.

The manufacturers of music-rolls for player-pianos publish numbers of song accompaniments, for which, I believe, there is a considerable demand. If the instrument is handled by a practised operator, it is possible, by this means, to provide a fairly satisfactory accompaniment to a singer rehearsing a song ; but I do not think that a truly artistic performance can be obtained without the sympathetic touch of the human hand upon the keyboard. The accompaniment is part of the song, no less than the voice ; and the effect of the most artistic vocalism is imperfectly felt where the accompaniment is on a lower artistic plane. Still, for practice, the mechanical player may be very serviceable where it is impossible to find an accompanist who can read at sight.

It is another matter for the operator of the player-piano to sing to his own accompaniment. To do this with any success at all, he must practise diligently and conscientiously, because in a song the accompaniment must follow the voice, not the voice the accompaniment ; and, however skilful he may be in handling the machine, he will never find it as

obedient to the will as the fingers are. The fingers respond directly to the intentions of the mind; the machine is indirect in its response. And, even if he attacks the problem seriously, he can hardly expect to do more than achieve a moderately satisfactory *ensemble* in two or three songs. He will find it exceedingly difficult to learn an unfamiliar song from a music-roll, because the perforations on a music-roll, only a small section of which is visible at any given moment, are almost impossible to read. And if, by way of overcoming this difficulty, the vocal melody is included in the accompaniment in such a way as to stand out clearly, the *ensemble* is disfigured. Take such a song as *O du mein holder abendstern* from *Tannhäuser,* let the melody be included in the accompaniment, and you will see what I mean. The vocal melody and harmonic accompaniment are, as it were, two individual but kindred poetic ideas, which are to be fused in the rendering of the song; and the inclusion of the voice part in the accompaniment, except where this is done of set purpose, vitiates the desired effect no less than would be the case if a party of glee singers added their voices to that of the soloist by humming the harmonies.

My own opinion is that the amateur, if he cannot read at sight, or learn to finger an accompaniment correctly after a little practice, had better content himself with the kind of vocalism which wakes the echoes of the bathroom; or, if the implied accompaniment does not satisfy him, find some kindly person to oblige upon the keyboard. With the player-piano and the music-roll he can never hope to achieve much. To attempt many songs in that way is impossible. To tie oneself down to two or

three is bad. It is bad because no work of art will endure endless repetition; the work will become hackneyed, and the fact will show itself in the performer's manner of rendering it. Therefore I do not recommend mechanical self-accompaniment to the amateur who takes music seriously and desires to profit by it.

XXXVII

PROFIT by music! How can anybody profit by music? You know the kind of person who will ask such a question. "Music," he will say, "very entertaining, very amusing—passes the time away, like table-tennis and Mah Jong. But to suggest that those who appreciate it profit thereby is sheer frivolity masquerading as culture."

Now, suppose you consider music apart from all other art, all other knowledge, and never consider it in any other way, you may well come to regard it, the small and the great alike, as simply the means of making or obtaining light recreation; and, however much it may gratify or move you, it will never appear to you in any other guise. You will set your face, indeed, against any suggestion which music itself may make to the contrary effect. You will insist that, however agreeable these sounds may be, they are demonstrably meaningless, since they cannot be translated into verbal ideas; and, therefore, unimportant and useless. And you will find your common-sense view supported with sincerity by Tolstoy, and paradoxically by Oscar Wilde.

I know all about this point of view, because for a long time it was my own, or very nearly so. Perhaps I was never quite confident about it, but felt a slight misgiving. It is the materialistic, the utilitarian point of view; and I think it chilled me somewhat, even when I was almost convinced by it. It was

mathematical rather than human. This, of course, is a faulty distinction ; for the science of mathematics is a product of human thought. But I use the term in a special sense. Mathematics is an objective science, and takes no heed of the nature of man. It counts, defines, and classifies objects ; and that is the *alpha* and the *omega* of it. Its definitions are necessary, that we may gauge the size and shape of all things that we control and all things that control us. But it is only a part of science, not the whole of it. And the philosophical side of science, especially in its metaphysical and psychological branches, proceeds in disregard of mathematics, and sometimes almost in defiance of it. And the same is true of ethics, which springs from metaphysics and psychology alike. This is the human side of science, as opposed to the material side.

My bent happened to be philosophical rather than mathematical. I was one of those who could not help qualifying the laws of political economy, for example, by bringing human nature to bear upon them. And, whatever it may become in the future, human nature is still beautifully uncertain, and fully deserves the epithet fastened upon it by the immortal Squeers.

Judged from the common-sense point of view, music is undoubtedly a luxury, and a frivolous luxury at that. And so are painting, sculpture, and literature in many of its branches, frivolous luxuries. " The artist," says the plain, practical man, " tells me, or suggests to me, that he is a useful member of society, deserving well of the republic. I put to the artist this question : Suppose that everybody took your suggestion to heart, and, by way of being serviceable to society, spent his time composing or performing

music, painting pictures, modelling statuary, or writing poetry, novels, or *belles lettres ;* who would feed us, clothe us, transport us from one place to another, build houses for us, provide those houses with heat and light, and perform all the other tasks necessary for the well-being of civilised men and women, artists included ? "

There is a poser for the artist ; but not so deadly a poser as the plain, practical questioner imagines. The questioner is making a suggestion, namely, that no industry, however diligently pursued, is useful unless it contributes directly to our material welfare. So the artist finds himself by no means in solitude as a frivolous member of society, but enjoying the company of monarchs, statesmen, judges, bishops, schoolmasters, financiers, and all the planetary beings that rotate around these shining stars. This, though it proves or disproves nothing, is, at any rate, encouraging to the artist.

If the artist is wise, however, he will not rest content with that encouragement ; for there happen to be certain plain, practical, utilitarian people going about to-day who do seriously assert that monarchs, statesmen, judges, bishops, schoolmasters, and financiers, as well as artists, are, socially, of much less importance than those who feed and clothe us, transport us hither and thither, build us houses, and so forth ; that these latter are the only really useful citizens ; the rest being, in a greater or lesser degree, parasites upon their labour.

Now, the truth of the matter is, that we are all necessarily parasites upon one another's labour. We are interdependent, and, of our progressive wisdom, we have made ourselves so. It is because we are wise enough to take advantage of one another's

labour, instead of grubbing about independently for sustenance, that we are a civilised community, highly developed, and actively developing.

When we come to consider the relative importance of different industries, we have to keep in mind, not only their relation to our direct needs, but also their bearing upon our progress as a community. At once the general correctness of our historical estimates becomes apparent. It is true that we cannot live without bread and shelter; but without law, statesmanship and science we cannot advance. Though life itself is sweet, it is instinctive in us to recognise that it is our destiny, and, more than that, our right and duty to move upward and forward from lower to higher things—from less to greater knowledge, from hazy superstition to the mastery of mind over matter. And so all, whom circumstances permit to see beyond their own immediate cares, recognise, and cannot help recognising, that lawgivers, statesmen and scientists play a more significant part in human affairs than bakers and bricklayers. The purely utilitarian view is a very short view when you come to look into it. It is the view of one whose gaze is so concentrated upon the things of to-day that he is blind to the things of to-morrow and the things of yesterday. It is the view which, developed into custom, leads to stagnation, or, into action, to social disaster. Instances of both are visible to us at the present day.

The value of the general principle here enunciated is affected in no way at all by the fact that accidents of fortune make it easier for some people to achieve success and distinction than for others. Your ploughman may be a "mute, inglorious Milton"; his lowly place in life, his poverty, his illiteracy,

may give the lie to an inborn capacity for leadership in the realms of thought; but the likelihood that, under fairer social conditions, he might have matched the achievements of Milton, does not alter the fact that society owes less to his ploughmanship than to Milton's thought. When Wordsworth saw England as "a fen of stagnant waters," he piously exclaimed: "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour"; and he invoked his great predecessor to "raise us up . . . give us manners, virtue, freedom, power!" But he expressed no desire that Milton's gardener, or his tailor, or his bootmaker should return to life; and he did not suggest that England was the poorer for their loss. And even Gray, imbued as he was with the highly sentimental liberalism of his times, did not specially commend his ploughman for having tilled the soil, but regretted instead the burial in obscurity of a potential poet or statesman.

Now, you can say that while a poet cannot do without the bread which the baker bakes the baker can do perfectly well without the poetry which the poet writes. And, if you limit the question to one poet and one baker, your point of view is right enough. But the matter takes on a different aspect when you come to consider the needs of organised society as a whole. Poetry which contains the elements of true wisdom, though it may have no power to keep the individual alive from hour to hour or from day to day, may, nevertheless, by being widely disseminated, quicken the minds of countless individuals, and implant in them habits of thought both productive and constructive. The mere preparing and eating of food, making and wearing of clothes, building and occupation of houses, will not promote the advancement of society in any respect. These

actions are necessary that we may live; but they call for no special exertion of the intellect; and consequently they in themselves do not widen the intellect or rouse it to activity. They are, in fine, a result and not a cause of civilisation. That which we call civilisation (an organised social state capable of almost unlimited development, as opposed to a mere fortuitous gathering of dissociated individuals) we owe to the excessive exertions of superior individual brains. The progress of organised society rests entirely upon education; and all that education consists in is the spread among the many of the learning or knowledge to which the thought of the highly intelligent few has given expression. Remove education, debar the many from access to this expressed thought, and progress inevitably ceases.

Almost any intelligent person can become a baker, tailor, bricklayer, or ploughman, but it is given to very few to find expression for the elements of true wisdom. Men are not born equal. Their powers of achievement vary very widely; and this is so even in the members of a single family, connected with one another by the closest ties of kindred. Fortune may sometimes prevent the ablest men from making full use of their ability, or even from developing it at all; but she redresses the balance by denying the achievements of ability to the incompetent. Only they who are born great can achieve greatness. And it is to those who are born great, and have been enabled by good fortune to make the fullest use of their exceptional powers that society owes the largest debt. Without the driving force supplied by the minds of such men the mass of ordinary people could never achieve anything, and civilised society would be like

a steamship without a captain or an engineer, doomed to immobility and dissolution.

Men such as Milton, Gray and Wordsworth did, in varying degrees, achieve greatness. They were gifted with active and inquiring minds; and they were idealists. They perceived elements in the life of mankind not perceptible to others; but, because they were poets, and had the gift of artistic expression, they made those elements clearly perceptible to others. They could express themselves in beautiful language; and, because their language is beautiful, it is vivid, and the sense of their words is rendered doubly clear. Therein lies the value of the poetic forms of expression, and of beautiful and allusive language as opposed to the plain forms of predication.

But this inborn gift of beautiful expression (which no man who has it not can acquire) cannot be separated from the gift of clear and direct thought. These two things are of one substance. Every great thinker is almost of necessity a poet; every great poet almost of necessity a great thinker. Indeed, I state the proposition too diffidently. It is an invariable rule. The great thinker has always the gift of eloquence; and the highest eloquence is always the sign of great thinking. It is from the exploring and inventive mind that true poetry springs. And true poetry ranges far beyond the limits of metrical expression.

Had Darwin, for example, been but a painstaking collector of scientific data, he could never have achieved a revolution in human thought. He achieved this revolution because he had the gift of eloquence; and he had the gift of eloquence because his perception was vivid and far-reaching. His patient investigations enabled him to give a compre-

hensive and exhaustive statement of all the evidence upon which his conclusions were grounded; but those conclusions his genius had already grasped, while the supporting evidence was still fragmentary and unconfirmed. He was not merely a scientist; he was an artist of science.

XXXVIII

At first sight it seems a long step from a scientist like Darwin to an imaginative poet like Shelley. Darwin was a thinker who dealt with concrete facts, and reasoned closely from evidence scientifically defined and classified; while Shelley, it would appear, was a dreamer who dealt with cloudy fancies, and did not so much discover truths as happen upon them in gleams of inspiration and in morbid apparitions. What else have they in common, you would say, but their gift of clear and concise expression? Fantastic though the statement may seem, that which they shared in common was the scientific cast of mind. Shelley was not, like Byron, a mere rebel and destructive critic, but essentially a constructive thinker, a diviner of the secrets of nature. He gauged, and he was one of the first to gauge, the intimate relationship of human life with the inanimate forces, as we call them, of the universe. While Byron at great length forged prosaic notions and inconclusive fancies into metrical rhyme, Shelley found in poetry a natural mode of expressing thoughts which probed the very elements of life. That Shelley failed to build up an enduring philosophy is due to his early death. He left us but the youthful stirrings of an intellect, which, had it grown to full maturity, must have equalled the towering intellect of Goethe.

The important thing to note is that this most

poetic of poets, whose verse is unexcelled in absolute beauty, had a naturally scientific imagination. His beautiful verses were bound in pretty leather covers, and adorned the boudoirs of fashionable young ladies, who relished the music of his words. But in those beautiful verses, unobserved by the fashionable young ladies, he opened up vistas of speculation which caused men to think in a productive manner of nature and the spirit of mankind. Men unconsciously absorbed his tentative philosophy, and it put life before them in a new aspect.

And that which is true of Shelley, is true also, in varying degrees, of Sophocles, Lucretius, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton and Goethe. In the widest (and most proper) sense of that term, all these poets were men of science. They were dreamers; but they were thinkers as well. Their minds were of the same pattern as the minds of those who investigated and reasoned from concrete facts.

But the art-work of a poet is given to us in the palpable form of words. The meaning of words is instantly intelligible to us, because, not only are they the means whereby we communicate our thoughts to others, and others their thoughts to us; but every idea that strikes the mind fashions itself in words. The terms and propositions employed by the poet denote to us what they denoted to him; and so our minds are able to absorb his ideas just as if he were speaking to us.

There are many plain—that is to say, matter-of-fact, unspeculative—people, who will admit readily enough the possibility of culling wisdom from the poets. They will regard poetry as a pretty and decorative way of expressing wisdom, or whatever else happens to enter the author's head. They will

accept it as a fanciful mode of putting thoughts on record. And they will admit, though less readily, that some measure of wisdom may be gleaned from the study of paintings and sculpture, which reproduce visibly that which the eye has perceived. But when it comes to music they will shake their heads, and declare that from sounds which denote nothing there is nothing to be learned. And so, while most forms of literature, and many forms of painting and sculpture will be treated seriously, and embodied in every rational curriculum of instruction, music will remain the Cinderella of the arts, left to take care of itself—regarded as a mere polite accomplishment, or a plaything wherewith to while the time away.

From my own experience, and from my observation of others, I have come to the conclusion that the study of the highest class of music is a very material aid to culture, vitalising the mind, and quickening one's perception of other things ; and I am satisfied that the contemplation of this wordless language induces a serene spirit, enabling its possessor to take wide and generous views. But I should not be content to accept these things as cause and effect without having some idea in my mind of what music is, and what it signifies.

Music is a form of human expression. A human being rendering music spontaneously (not repeating it, that is to say, from memory, by a conscious effort), expresses thereby something which is in his mind. It reveals a thought ; but it reveals it in tones, not in words. The thought which it reveals is not that which is uppermost in the giver's mind ; for, if it were, he would express it aloud or to himself in words ; but it is an undercurrent, a general idea permeating his mind. It is not necessary for him

to express it audibly, for he can think in terms of music no less than in terms of words. But, if he does express it audibly to another person concerned in listening to him, the general idea is transferred to that other person's mind together with the tones that it induces. This general idea is, of necessity, beautiful, because beauty is the essence of all spontaneous musical expression.

All musical expression was in the first instance direct and vocal. In its primitive form it would not seem beautiful to us. Neither would the crude pigments with which primitive people adorned their bodies gratify our senses. The earliest instrumental music, played on stringed instruments adapted from the twanging bow-string, and trumpets, which were possibly nothing more than megaphones, would appear harsh and unmelodious to our ears. But to the ears of primitive men it sounded, no doubt, quite as beautiful as the music of Beethoven and Wagner sounds to us. In like manner, when we admire the paintings of reindeer and bisons found in the Cromagnon caves, it is the ingenuity, the artistic sense of those palæolithic men and women that we applaud ; but a similar sketch by a modern painter would most certainly, and most properly, be rejected by the committee of the Royal Academy.

Thus, when we are considering the effect of music on ourselves and its significance to us, it is useless to discuss the music of our remote ancestors. The music we have to consider is that of our own epoch —the written, printed, and elaborately performed music to which our senses are accustomed, and which is characteristic of our period, and a corporate part of our culture. And here we must take note of a remarkable fact concerning music. Although there

can be little doubt that music is one of the oldest forms of artistic expression, if not the very oldest, yet it is the newest of the organised arts. Sculpture and painting with their architectural developments carry us back to remote Egyptian dynasties, and to the even more remote civilisation of Sumeria. Literature as a means of recording facts is almost as old as sculpture and painting, and was, indeed, their child ; and, as an art, expanding into conventions of style and beauty of expression, it goes back to the days of the Iliad, and of the chronicles of the Israelite monarchies. But there is no trace in all the old river civilisations, or in Athens and Rome in their historic days, or even in Alexandria or Byzantium under the Grecian emperors, of the art of music being anything more than traditional, a craft handed on from priest to priest, or from minstrel to minstrel, by ear and by memory. Save for a clumsy alphabetical form of musical notation, expressing only plain melodies, and incapable of recording harmonies or changes of key, or even the value of individual notes' which was used to a limited extent by the Greeks and Romans, there appears to have been no writing of music in all those ages ; and the name of no composer of music has come down to us. It was not until what we call the Middle Ages were well advanced that the monks began to set music down on scrolls by a method of notation legible at sight ; although, to our minds, at any rate, their method of inscribing the ascending and descending scales on horizontal lines seems far more obvious than any of the methods of writing words.

Habit sways the minds of men ; and it is to its tardy development as an organised art that we may attribute the general indifference of people of culture

to the significance of music. Long usage had stamped upon their minds the importance of literature and painting. Music had no place in their habits, and they ignored it.

We must note this also that since music has become an organised art, it has been possible for the ideas which it expresses to be transferred from their originator to others by means of legible documents ; so that the music, no less than the sayings, of the dead, or of men living in other places, can be rendered to us by anyone who can read them. But only a very expert musician is able, by reading the silent print, to hear the actual cadences of the music in his mind ; and in that respect there is a wide gap between music and literature.

XXXIX

Let us consider now a familiar piece of modern music, generally regarded as a particularly fine work of art, and see, if we can, what it suggests and what it means to us. A better example cannot be found than the opening *Adagio* from Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata, which, as it presents few technical difficulties to the trained pianist, is played by all sorts of people, expert and inexpert. Practically every European, not deficient in the power to recognise shades of tone, and accustomed to the things of culture, knows it well.

This music is the expression of certain ideas which possessed the mind of Beethoven when he composed it. The poetic interpreter lets the music take possession of his mind while he studies it, in order that he may absorb the ideas which it expresses; and, when he plays the music, he feels it, just as the truly artistic actor feels the part he is rendering in a play. The listener, if he too has the gift of poetry (and most of us have it), receives into his consciousness the suggestion which the player, in his interpretation, reveals. That is the extreme case—poetic interpreter and poetic listener. To another listener the music will seem beautiful in comparison with other pieces of music, but will convey no other impression. But when the interpretation is unpoetical, being really a reading and not an interpretation at all; or when the listener himself is

incapable of receiving any suggestion from the cadences of the music ; then the impression will be altered ; and, according to his temperament, the performance will either irritate him, as the lifeless recitation of some familiar poem would irritate him, or else it will give him a feeling of mild pleasure, occasioned by the soothing effect of gentle musical tones upon his nerves.

Such different effects may be created by the performance of a work of great beauty. But suppose that, instead of a masterpiece fashioned by the mind of a great man, we have rendered to us a pretty trifle invented by some amiable mediocrity. As a familiar example of this sort of work, Raff's *La Fileuse* will serve very well. All that Raff's mind contained when he wrote that music was a pretty, conventional, musical idea ; and this exactly, and no more than this, is what the music expresses. Out of its cadences and its harmonies, however treated, nothing more significant than this can be extracted. It is true that a work like *La Fileuse* seems to assume a glorified shape when such a pianist as Vladimir de Pachmann plays it. Under his hands it sounds as if it might be the lighter fancy of a man of genius instead of the highest endeavour of a very commonplace person. But the truth is that when Pachmann plays an agreeable trifle such as *La Fileuse* he makes it the vehicle of his own self-expression ; and that which we hear is not a rendering of Raff's ideas, but a rendering of Pachmann's ideas on a background provided by Raff.

The artist in the true sense of the word is a person, in whose nature the spiritual side is more powerful than the animal side. In other words, his special activities are called forth by spiritual rather than

material necessities. This is so in every branch of art. All true art-work takes birth in an atmosphere of refinement. And, inversely, all work in art forms produced under these conditions (which the artist himself creates) contains the elements of artistic worth. And, as artistic worth cannot be dissociated from beauty, all such work contains the elements of beauty. Therefore, while the influence of the greatest works of art is, of necessity, more powerful, and, for that reason, more beneficial than that of the lesser, the elements of beauty are to be found in the latter also. When we speak of a work of art as being "pretty" we mean that it contains the elements of beauty in an appreciable degree.

Beauty, then, is the sign by which we know the work of art from the work which is not of art. Beauty is the quality which appeals to and satisfies our æsthetic sensibilities. Every Londoner, for example, is aware that Westminster Abbey is a work of art, and that the big block of flats, known as Queen Anne's Mansions, is not a work of art; that the road bridge at Blackfriars is a work of art, and that the railway bridge by the side of it is not. It would grieve even the most insensible Londoner if Westminster Abbey and the road bridge at Blackfriars were demolished, and structures like Queen Anne's Mansions and the railway bridge put up in their place. The work of art gives pleasure; the work which is not of art fails to give pleasure, and may, under certain conditions, give pain.

All works of music, then, which are works of art possess this element of beauty, and convey the sense of it to the person who studies or hears them. The difference between the greater and lesser works of music, however, is not merely that of a larger or

smaller degree of beauty. The true distinction is that, while the lesser works contain no other element than beauty, the greater works contain an idea as well. The lesser works give you merely pleasing cadences, but the greater works convey to you some element of the genius which created them. You have beauty without an idea in the one case, and beauty with an idea in the other; and the more forcible the idea is, the greater is the beauty. I do not mean by this that so-called programme music is necessarily the most beautiful. That which I call the idea is the poetic inspiration of the music, which is stronger in the works of Scarlatti, for example, than in those of Liszt.

It is different with literature, only a small proportion of which is artistic. In literature the idea predominates, and must predominate; and the artistic merit of the work can be gauged by the manner in which the idea is presented to you. Bad literature is that which is badly written, so that the significance of the idea is obscured or disfigured. There is, and there can be no such thing as literature without an idea. Even a single term denotes something.

But a single cadence of music denotes nothing; and its repetition denotes nothing. Yet the conjunction of certain cadences and their fusion with certain other cadences may denote something—an idea of which we are aware, although we cannot translate it into a verbal proposition. The truth seems to be that words and music influence our intelligence in different dimensions. Words segregate one idea from among all others, and put it before us in definite terms, so that we know at once what the idea is. But music, however eloquent, cannot do this. That

which the greatest and most expressive music conveys to us is that dominating undercurrent, in the author's mind, of idea in its elemental form, which we call mood when we refer to its influence at a particular moment, or character when we speak of it in a general sense. Music may speak to us; but the function of mind which it affects is not the same as that which words influence. Music may express directly those impalpable things, which words can catch only with much labour, troublesome to him who reads no less than to him who writes.

Possibly I am presenting here an excellent example of the case in point.

XL

But we are out of the wood now. We have got hold of something which serves the purpose of a definition. We know that all good music is a revelation to us of beauty in a lesser or greater degree ; and that great music reveals something more to us, namely, the elemental idea from whence it sprang. And we may rest satisfied with the proposition that the greater music is of necessity the more beautiful.

Now, I am firmly of the opinion that those who are quite incapable of appreciating and understanding music are very few ; and I am equally sure that the cause of their failure to do this is physical. I believe, in fact, that a section of their brain does not function as it should. You will find that, in most cases, the same people are impervious to beauty and ugliness in speaking voices, and are not specially pleased with the former, nor irritated by the latter. A sense is defective in them which is effective in almost everybody else. And when it is observed how a deficiency in the power of speech, for example, can sometimes be remedied by the treatment of a cerebral gland it is not unreasonable to hope that a cure may yet be found for " the man that hath no music in himself"; whose character, if there is anything in my hypothesis, Shakespeare grossly maligned.

That man, at any rate, is cut off from the influences of music ; and I think I can show that, unless, like William Morris, he has artistic susceptibilities highly

developed in other directions, he is greatly the loser by reason of his deficiency. For, consider the gifts which music bestows, and see whether they do not bring other gifts in their train.

The full understanding of music, or of any other form of art, comes with experience. To begin with, one is conscious chiefly of the beauty of music ; and a work is accepted or rejected upon that ground alone. So that the primary influence of music is that of beauty—beauty which is essentially spiritual. The effect of spiritual beauty is simply that it beautifies whatever absorbs it. That which absorbs it in this case is the mind of the student or listener, from which the beauty of music expels whatever sordid and ugly ideas it harbours. If this influence is at once removed, and is not revived, the mind will open itself again to other influences, and all that possessed it before will take possession of it again. But if the influence is not removed, but is constantly renewed, it will enter so firmly into possession of the mind as to fortify it against other influences less beautiful ; and the mind, though it can never become immune from the accidents of its environment, will take a calmer and more philosophical view of life than it did before ; truculent egoism (trading under whatever name it may), will give place to urbanity, restlessness to serenity ; and inevitably the spirit will incline to hope rather than despair.

I remember that on hearing a certain very lovely slow movement by Beethoven performed a number of years ago, a friend of mine remarked that if only the mood engendered in him by that music could be made permanent he would be a saint for the rest of his life. And it struck me that the listener, who could absorb such music as that was undoubtedly

free from sin during that moment. That was the immediate effect of spiritual beauty upon the mind. As soon as he was free from the spell, all the elements of sin would return to the man, all the paltriness and perversity of his nature would show forth again, and he would be guilty of thoughts and acts which were ugly, and added ugliness to the world around him. But the inference was obvious. The magic which worked so beneficially on this occasion would act in the same way on future occasions ; and the more often the man absorbed the elements of beauty into his mind, the less often would his thoughts and actions be ugly and mean.

But here our disgraceful human nature steps in, and warns us that it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Now, religion is a beautiful thing. Considered in its purest sense, there is no conception more beautiful. Yet we know that many, who have made the study and practice of this beautiful thing their vocation in life, act and express themselves habitually in a way that is not at all beautiful. The reason is that incessant contemplation has made the thing stale and commonplace to their senses, which happened not to be active or versatile enough to reach out towards those higher conceptions which beauty implies. And so it is in the case of music. Not infrequently the professional musician, who entered the profession originally because the beauty of music attracted him, becomes quite indifferent to that beauty, and performs whatever he has to perform, not as an artist, but as an automaton. With him the case is the same as with the man of religion. He is artist enough to recognise and appreciate the elements of beauty, but not artist enough to seek its implications.

Cases of this sort, however, are not the rule, even in the lower ranks of the musical profession. The rule is that the contemplation and absorption of beauty carries the mind, temporarily or permanently, out of reach of petty, ungenerous and ugly thoughts, and implants in it the desire for nobler things, so paving the way for a wider and wiser outlook on life. The influence of beauty thus resembles every good influence in reaching the active intelligence of man through his subconscious soul. Evil influences proceed in the opposite way—they permeate his active intelligence before they become a part of his subconscious self. That is why vice is always deliberate and self-conscious, while virtue is impulsive and unconscious of itself.

Such is the influence of beauty in the sense which I have indicated. And art is the medium which the reason of man has evolved for giving expression to beauty. Art is more potent than nature in expressing beauty, because art is essentially human. Unhuman nature is man's enemy as well as his friend, and its enchantments are ever mingled in his senses with an element of fear. But art is always friendly, and fear is the one emotion that it cannot inspire in any normal being.

And of all arts music is the richest in beauty, the most obviously beautiful, the quickest to imprint itself upon the thoughts and feelings.

XLI

It is inevitable, then, that he who loves music, and studies it closely, not as a mathematical science, but as a species of poetry, will discover something more in its grandest periods than beauty alone. First he will notice that certain pretty music is shallow and suggests nothing else than its own prettiness; and that certain other music is so pretty as to be beautiful and suggests something more than itself—some emotion to which its composer, in writing it, was giving expression. This latter kind of music he will come to call good music. But presently it will be borne upon him that certain music expresses something more forcible than emotions; that it speaks like a voice; and that the thing it expresses is the abstract of the thoughts of a great man. This will show much more plainly in some works than in others, and will be seen to characterise particularly the works of certain composers.

These composers were great men. Not only were they men of genius, in the sense of being inspired, and being master-craftsmen, but their minds had a great range, and their thoughts were deep and consecutive. I consider that their music alone is sufficient to show this. It seems clear to me that none but a very great mind could have created the Ninth Symphony, or *Die Meistersinger*. I feel the same, and in an equal degree, about the *Passion* music; and in a lesser degree about *The Messiah*

and the *Jupiter* Symphony. In Wagner's case my impression is confirmed, because he was a poet and an essayist as well as a musician, and has left his thoughts voluminously on record. There were times when he spoke as only a man of genius and a great thinker could speak (as in his Venice diary, for example); and as no more than that can be said of Milton, Molière, Goethe, and Balzac, I feel that the evidence concerning Wagner suffices. In Beethoven's case, since he did not express himself freely in words, I have to couple his musical self-expression with the reputation he bore among those who knew him. But perhaps his dedication of the *Eroica* Symphony, *Beethoven à Bonaparte*, equal to equal, speaks for itself.

Of Bach, the man, apart from his works we know little beyond the rather significant fact that during his sojourn in Leipzig he was held in the highest esteem among the "intellectuals" of that cultured city. But seeing that we have plain evidence of Wagner's greatness, and little reason to question that of Beethoven; and that Bach's music, while it stands equal to theirs in beauty, power and feeling, excels it in craftsmanship, it seems very reasonable to suppose that Bach was also a great man—a man who, so far as his environment allowed, thought deeply and had a clear vision of men and things.

If we allow that these were great men, and that their force of intellect finds expression in their music; and if we bear in mind the influence exerted by such force through the medium of other arts; we are quite justified in assuming that anyone, who masters their works and gauges their significance in comparison with other works of music, can thereby, not only receive into his mind the elemental ideas of which

those works are the expression, but keep them there and be enriched by them, just as he might store up and profit by wisdom expressed in words. In the music of *Tristan und Isolde*, Wagner expresses not *Tristan* nor *Isolde*, but himself, his own mind. And that is what the music really expresses to us. There, it seems to me, is the abiding impression which such music makes—that one greater than the ordinary run of men has spoken.

And it is my belief that you cannot know, and love, and understand such music without your mind being expanded, and, by being expanded, rendered fitter to comprehend other things, to take long views, to see things in the light of reason. I believe that music is a great educative force, and that its potency is enhanced by the fact that its enduring impressions are received sub-consciously, and germinate in the recesses of the mind.

Here you have the key to all the preferences and all the antipathies which I have expressed in these pages. For what is called realism in music I feel nothing but contempt. The silly sheep bleating in Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote* (that massive piece of triviality) rouse my spleen to such an extent that I could have at them, like the Don, and slaughter the lot. The unmeaning, infinite craftsmanship of a composer like Max Reger will drive me out of the snuggest concert-room into all the garish inclemencies of the street, thankful to escape. The absurd, irrelevant "programmes" attached to otherwise significant works of music are a subject of constant annoyance to me. Unmusical noises out of musical instruments; grandiose displays of musical technique; and attempts to express in music those concrete and definite ideas which only words can

make clear: these things are intolerable to me. Amiable mediocrity I can put up with, because he is an agreeable companion, who, even though he has not much to talk about, has a pleasant and friendly manner. But for the mediocrity who employs his artistic craftsmanship to pander to an uneducated taste, and, by fortifying ignorance and illusion, betrays the art he professes to practise, I feel nothing but loathing. I would almost welcome such a liberal tyrant as Joseph II of Austria to stamp such people out of existence, together with the pseudo-moralising novelist, and the monger of journalistic sensation.

And those who look upon music as no more than a source of pleasant recreation will realise, if they read what is written here, why I, at any rate, am so fervent an advocate of the spread of musical education among the people generally. Our modern urban existence breeds many mental and moral diseases; and for these the remedy lies, in my belief, very largely in the study and practice of the fine arts. This is an age of unrest; and unrest, as the term is commonly used, signifies unintelligent discontent. I would like to see intelligent discontent, and an age of constructive reform, and of a moral progress keeping step with material advancement.

XLII

I HAVE drawn attention to the widespread delusion that science and art are antagonistic to one another. This delusion takes its rise in a general misunderstanding of science and of art ; and it is confirmed in many minds by the unscientific habits of second-rate artists, and the inartistic habits of second-rate scientists. It is a harmful delusion, and the injury it does cuts both ways. It robs science, to a large extent, of its glamour ; and it places art, to a large extent, at the mercy of the charlatan. The truth cannot be asserted too vehemently, or repeated too often, that science and art stand deep-rooted in one another, and that each is a prime necessity to the greater development of the other. The creative spirit is one in him who disentangles the secrets of nature, and him who gives voice to her wisdom and beauty. The Athenians understood this better than we do.

They have much to answer for who expounded the gospel of Art for Art's Sake at a period when the whole world of culture was prepared to take art to its bosom and to accept it as an integral part of learning and enlightenment. By representing art as moving in a circle, and leading to nothing but itself, they convinced serious people that it was a trivial thing to which culture owed nothing but its symmetry. The door of education, which was being opened cautiously to admit the stranger by inches, was shut

again in its face ; so that art, instead of becoming the heritage of all, became what it is to-day, the hobby of a few, of whom a certain number are still intoning the disastrous heresy. Can that noble altruist, Albert, Prince Consort, rest peacefully in his tomb ? He knew what science, art, and culture signified ; and he desired that all should know. The artists themselves in their silly pride were smashing his work to pieces before he was cold in his grave. And in place of enlightenment generously diffused, we had Maudle and Postlethwaite, and all the brainless rant of mutual admiration.

After the manner of Mr. Chadband, but not in his spirit, I put to myself a question : What is an amateur ? I ask it, not concerning Rugby football, or lawn tennis, or rowing, where some doubt seems to exist as to the correct definition ; but as to art, where, as far as I can see, no doubt can exist at all. An amateur is a person of culture, whose culture lacks one of its most essential elements, namely, knowledge and understanding of fine art. By dint of his culture he may acquire that knowledge and understanding, but only at the expense of other acquisitions. If he is lucky he may complete his self-education in middle age, a bad age in which to embark on the race of life.

But, if his self-education is effective, he may preach ; and there possibly his experience of various features of life, ranging from the pleasures of travel to the rigours of martial discipline, may help him. And I call to mind the wise words of Tom Hughes, who said that no man had any right to speak in public, vocally or in script, unless he had a sermon to preach ; which was as good as saying that, if he had a sermon to preach, he was entitled to hold forth

without more ado. Well, I have preached my sermon ; and, inverting the usual order of things, I proceed now to give out my text. It is not Art for Art's Sake, but Art for Life's Sake.

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